魔法少女育成計画

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illustration マルイノ

Magical Girl Raising Project

宝島社

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四人の足元には、動かなくなった
元魔法少女が横たわっていた。
「嫌なやつがいなくなった！」
「偉そうにしてるやつがね」

MAGICAL GIRL'S
リップル
手裏剣を投げれば
百発百中だよ
スノーホワイト
困っている人の
心の声が聞こえるよ
ルーラ
目の前の相手に
なんでも命令できるよ
カラミティ・メアリ
持ってる武器を
パワーアップ
できるよ
たま
いろんなものに素早く
穴を開けられるよ
ハードゴア・アリス
どんなケガをしても
すぐに治るよ
トップスピード
猛スピードで空を飛ぶ
魔法の箒を使うよ
ねむりん
他人の夢の中に
入ることができるよ

森の音楽家
ワラムベリー

音を自由自在に
操ることができるよ

スイムスイム

どんなものにも
水みたいに潜れるよ

ラ・ピュセル

剣の大きさを自由に
変えられるよ

二人合わせて
ピーキー
エンジェルズ！

ミナエル

生き物以外の
好きなものに変身できるよ

ユナエル

好きな生き物に
変身できるよ

マジカロイド44

未来の便利な道具を
毎日ひとつ使えるよ

シスターナナ

好きな人の力を
めいっぱい
引き出せるよ

ヴェス・
ウィンタープリズン

何もないところに
壁を作り出せるよ

WHAT IS THE
MAGICAL GIRL RAISING PROJECT?

☆Intuitive for beginners, but with a deep gameplay system that can satisfy advanced players!
★Collectible cards drawn by famous Illustrators!
☆Deep action game mechanics, move around freely, with a unique combat system!
★500+ Character classes! 2000+ Customizable items! The possibilities are endless!
☆Best of all, it's Free to Play for *life*!

Welcome to the world of dreams and magic!

This is an RPG where you can become the ultimate Magical Girl! This is the *Magical Girl Raising Project*!

You have been chosen by the *Land of Magic* to become a Guardian of the World! Using your magic abilities, you will be able to crush the forces of darkness and rid the world of evil!

Use your magical powers to fight for peace as a cute and powerful *Magical Girl*!!!

Not only do you have your cool magical powers, but you can also use mascot familiars, earn new costumes, equip a variety of items, and even customize your own catchphrase!

Defeat foes to collect *Magical Candy*! Use candies to level up, shop for new items, and increase your skills in a quest to become the ultimate *Magical Girl*!

The world is always in danger, thus, Magical Girls will always be needed.

So what are you waiting for?

Take the first step, and your dreams will surely come true!

PROLOGUE

That night, Ako Hatoda was in trouble.

After middle school was over, she went straight to her part-time job. After that, it was only a few minutes of walking from her job to the bus stop, and she finally went home.

However, when she got there, she realized that she had lost the key to her front gate.

It was a small key. Finding it would take quite a while, and not to mention it was nighttime. The sun went down faster in autumn, and she wouldn't be able to search for it properly with only the light from the moon and the street lights.

If she just waited for her aunt and uncle to come home, they'd be able to open the gate, but that didn't change the fact that she lost the key. Some stranger could use it, so they'd have to get the key changed.

She didn't want to cause any trouble.

It's been three months since her father had killed her mother.

After that, Ako began to live with her mother's younger brother, her uncle. She had become aware that she was becoming a burden. Her family let her go to the same school she had always gone to, they gave her an allowance, and let her do as she pleased.

She was such a burden.

Just once, she had gone to visit her father, but he turned her away and told her to never come again. Ako wasn't needed, not even by her father.

No one talked to Ako at school.

Everyone at school somehow knew that her father had stabbed her mother to death after an argument, and so made up rumors about her and gawked at her.

Ako was nothing but an undesirable existence, someone just causing problems for others. And so, she thought she'd be better off dead.

A while back, her grandma had told her with a sigh, "You've got a one-track mind, just like your father."

Ako didn't think this was a bad thing, though. It was much better than continuing to be a burden on everyone.

Ako had been slowly collecting what she needed to kill herself. She had been stealing just enough sleeping pills from her insomniac uncle to not get caught, and had been putting them in her desk at school. She was reaching the amount she needed.

But now, she had lost the key.

She wanted to die so she could stop being a burden, and yet she was still causing more problems. Losing the key at a time like this made her hate her careless self even more, and so she feebly crouched down in front of the gate.

To her, that lost key had now become the symbol of everything tormenting her. Ako couldn't think of anything but the key, and from her open eyes tears flowed down.

“Is something wrong?”

That's odd... Ako was here, so it might not have been so odd, but it was still very odd, it was an oddly cute-sounding voice of a girl.

“If something’s wrong, you can tell me about it. Like, oh, I don’t know… you lost a house key, for example?”

Ako looked up, and what she saw was a girl so beautiful your heart thumped just looking at her.

Skin so white it stood out from the darkness, as though it were transparent. Facial features so perfectly positioned you would think they were actually sculpted by hand. The girl's smile was strangely stiff, the imbalance of her beautiful appearance and her awkward smile making her all the cuter.

However, her outfit was certainly strange.

At first glance, it looked like she was wearing a school uniform, but the outfit's arrangement was too well-made. Close to a cosplay from some sort of anime or manga. Her scarf was bordered with frills, and her pleated skirt had white flower decorations hanging from it.

The insignia looked like it belonged to a school, but it at least wasn't any nearby school. Her knee socks had the same insignia... or so Ako thought, but it looks like they're actually white boots. Her hair was platinum blonde that shined in the moonlight, with a ribbon that was also decorated with many white flower decorations.

Two words first came into Ako's mind

Magical Girl.

Ako was dumbfounded, and before she realized it she had confessed to the girl that she had lost the key. The girl nodded, and said "Wait right there," and then disappeared. Wind was whirled up, and Ako smelled a fruit-like scent.

She's real. A real Magical Girl.

After Ako stood there still dumbfounded for five minutes, the girl returned, breathing heavily.

"Is this it?"

The key she showed Ako was without a doubt the key Ako had lost.

"Be more careful next time, okay?"

The girl then smiled. As though the smile invited her to, Ako gave her thanks to the girl. Their facial features were completely different, but her smile was just like her mother's when she was on good terms with her father. Pleasant, happy, and just looking at it would calm you. It was that kind of smile.

She bowed her head in thanks, and by the time she had raised it the girl was gone.

It really was a Magical Girl.

Ako was happier than ever. She felt a warm feeling near her heart. She no longer wanted to die. Magical Girls were real. Ako was saved.

Ako wondered if she too could become a Magical Girl. If she became a Magical Girl, she could be wanted. Her heart thumped just thinking about it.

Ako wondered if there were people out there who would need her.

CHAPTER 1:
BLACK & WHITE

Four years ago, a group of boroughs had been merged together to form the largest city near the coast of the country, N-City.

Within this metropolis, ancient buildings mixed with futuristic skyscrapers, while each district seemed to be its own design. Some districts had a distinctly futuristic feel, others had neglected mountainous ruins scattering it.

It's here where you will find the latest in human advancements. N-City boasts the world's best medical care, with the largest hospital in the world. At the same time, many large businesses have failed and gone bankrupt in the city.

Only in N-City can you find these things together.

There's a saying in N-City, "Progress waits for no one".

You either develop to become part of this metropolitan city, or you cease to exist under all the rubble.

Oh, there's also one more thing that N-City is famous for.

Supposedly, beginning June of last year, there have been sightings of *Magical Girls* flying and running around the city.

Eyewitnesses have said so many different things, and they just keep getting wilder.

There were sightings of cars being thrown around like it was paper, that a girl turned to liquid, even talk of a witch with a broomstick laughing as she zoomed across the night sky.

Then there was another incident, where some kids playing soccer accidentally kicked the ball to the train tracks. When they came to pick it up, they were nearly hit by the oncoming train if it weren't for what they said was "A girl in a knight outfit" stepped in and stopped the train.

Then there's the truly unexplainable ones, like a girl in a dog outfit running around on all fours. Those sightings people thought was just another weird form of teens daring each other.

All of these incidents have been classified as urban legends. Still, there's a strange unity to all these legends.

At first, the rumors of Magical Girls were laughed off as just that. Rumors, urban legends. The situations, the outfits, the sightings. They all sounded like they came from a hyperactive mind.

Then, the rumors started growing. More people reported similar sightings.

"I saw two angels. No, really… *Angels*! They were tiny little twins! They flew around holding each other's hands because they only had one wing each!"

Then, they gained traction online.

A website was created for documenting these sightings, and even for posting videos of the supposed Magical Girls.

Needless to say, there were videos posted, often with bad shaky camera-work. Then the discussions started pouring in.

"That video was the real thing! You can't fake something like that!"

"Nonsense, haven't you ever seen found-footage films? They're all made with some special effects, don't be so easily tricked!"

Whether you're at work, at school, or just browsing online, there's always discussions popping up. Occasionally, someone would chime in and claimed to have been personally helped by these Magical Girls.

"After she saved my life, I just kind of stood there, then I asked her, 'who are you?' and she just replied 'I'm a Magical Girl'".

With all of these sightings combined, it didn't take long for what came next.

A fanbase.

Fan sites were created, and there were even some sites that attempted to understand the scientific explanations for Magical Girls.

These girls became icons.

People started gathering more information about them, and sites run by multiple people update daily with the latest news and rumors.

In fact, in one of the latest updates, there was a sighting of a rather interesting Magical Girl.

According to the site, somewhere in the red-light district, in an abandoned mansion commonly rumored to be a safehouse of the local Mafia, there is a *Cowboy-Style Magical Girl* that's been sighted walking in and out of the building.

The site claims that she often smuggles weaponry, and that she might have ties to the Mafia.

"Hey guys, did you check out what the group just linked us?" said a Middle School girl waiting in the bus stop.

On her smartphone was a link to one of the Magical Girl sites, she was showing them off to her 2 friends next to her.

"Seriously? You're really into these kinds of things, aren't you? Those stories are all fake, y'know?"

"Huh!? What're you talking about? This is super real!"

"The one you linked is some Anonymous post, that makes it even *less* credible."

"It's Anonymous because they might get targeted by the Mafia!!! They might even secretly be a member themselves! How else would they know where the safehouses are and how it works?"

"Are you listening to yourself? Let's pretend for a second that it's true. Why would a member of the Mafia post something like this? If there *was* a Magical Girl working for them, why would they wanna expose her?"

"Man, why do you have to ruin everything?"

"I'm just stating the facts, is all."

"But don't you think it'll be so much more exciting living in a world with Magical Girls?"

While the two busy talking, the third girl was just sitting silently, listening to their conversation.

She finally spoke,

“Yatsu-chan, Sumi-Chan. I really think you’re both wrong. Magical Girls won’t work for something like the Mafia… And, also, you can definitely have Magical Girls in this world,” the girl said while smiling.

Once she started, she didn’t stop.

“Magical Girls will fight on the side of justice! For the good guys! They fight to help people, not to hurt them! So, if there are Magical Girls, I’m sure they’ll all be heroes!”

The two girls looked at their friend and then at each other.

“Well… thanks for sharing your opinions, Koyuki. Let’s hope they become a reality, huh?”

“Man, Koyuki. You really do have some idealistic fantasies.”

Just behind the 3 Middle School girls was a tall 7 story building. On the roof of that building, unknown to them, was another girl that had the same thoughts they did.

She was wearing a strange garb. A red and black color scheme. Throughout her outfit are various patterns that resemble Shurikens. She wore some Genpa on her feet. Traditional wooden shoes.

Honestly, it’s more accurate to call it a costume rather than some normal outfit.

She was browsing her smartphone as well. Apparently browsing the same site that the other 3 girls were sharing with each other.

She wondered out loud,

“…Could it be?”

She changed the screen on her phone.

A heart-shaped light shone from the screen, and instantly, the casing of her phone changed into something out of a chessboard. It had transformed into a Magical Phone.
White and black tiles, with a heart-shaped screen display. Just in the corner of her screen, emerged what seemed to be a strange creature on her screen.

The creature was heart-shaped, white on its left side, but black on its right side. It had eyes, but no mouth. It had some small wings that continuously flapped. When it does flap, it releases some sort of sparkling effect.

When it speaks, it has a childlike voice, tiny and cute.

It's the Mascot of the social game. His name is Fav.

"Is it the Gunner, Pon? Do you think it's serious, Pon?" asked Fav from the phone.

The tiny spherical creature immediately did a somersault on the spot, sparkling little stars fell out of him as he did, as his tiny dotted eyes looked excited.

"If it's really Calamity Mary and she's gone off the deep end, Ohhh boy, we're gonna have a handful to deal with, Pon!"

Calamity Mary is the Magical Girl living in the red-light district.

She was originally assigned to be that district's patron, their resident guardian.

Although recently, Calamity Mary has taken to calling that district more akin to her *territory* more than anything else.

Cruel, Sadistic, Barbaric. There's no shortage of words to describe the deeds that Calamity Mary had done in her career.

Since then, Fav has considered her an outsider.

"I wonder who posted these sightings. It can't possibly be me, Pon. Is it the other Magical Girls, I wonder, Pon?"

"…I'm not sure."

The girl didn't think twice, and swiped her thumb across to another page. This time it's of a more familiar face.

"*The White Magical Girl*, huh? She's gotten popular."

“Ah, yeah. Snow White’s been working the hardest out of all of you. It’s no wonder people have been seeing *her* the most, Pon! Look at that, she’s got an entire page to herself on the site, Pon!”

The spherical character suddenly appeared outside of the phone, materializing in an instant. Its cartoonish cylindrical shape still maintained.

“That’s just the tip of the iceberg, Pon! Since she became a Magical Girl, her productivity has doubled in the last few weeks, Pon!”

As Fav said this, he jumped around and flapped his wings, making sparkling effects in real life this time.

Meanwhile, the girl just continued scrolling past the page.

“Ripple, you didn’t even look at Snow White’s page, Pon!”

“Mhm…”

“Do I detect a *rivalry* between you two, Pon?”

“No, it’s nothing like that. It’s just that most of the things she’s done are pretty much the same. No need to look through all of them.”

“A rivalry’s good, Pon! It strengthens character! Makes close friendships! Competing with others to help people can only be a good thing, Pon!”

“…*Sigh*”

The girl, Ripple, took her eyes off her phone. She straightened her legs, stood up, and holstered her phone to her belt.

Then, she jumped off the edge of the roof. It was about a 20 meter drop from the roof to the ground.

She landed without a sound.

“Why’d you jump all of a sudden, Pon?” asked Fav, still on the rooftop.

“I needed to get away from someone annoying,” replied Ripple from a distance.

“Wow… grumpy, Pon…”

From the sky, there was a small dot in the distance that seemed to get bigger. As Fav continued to keep his eyes on Ripple, the dot in the sky continued to get bigger and closer.

Eventually, it started to look human, and when it got close enough to the roof, Fav looked at it and screamed with joy.

“Top Speed!”

A witch riding a broomstick, the Magical Girl known as *Top Speed* zoomed past the roof, straight down to the streets.

She stopped short in front of Ripple and looked her right in the eyes.

“Ripple! How’ve ya been? You look nice and healthy! Been eatin’ your veggies, I hope?”

Ripple responded to her greetings with a grumble and a scowl.

Top Speed responded to that with a sly smile.

“Still as tsundere as ever, I see!”

“…I should’ve started running earlier”

“Aw, c’mon! Us Magical Girls gotta stick together!”

“Mhm, sure…”

“Anyways, I didn’t just come here to chit-chat, though the chit-chat’s actually pretty fine with me!”

The way Top Speed talked, her tone, her talking pace. It annoyed Ripple to no end. Still, Ripple had always tried to deal with it, and it didn’t seem like Top Speed even noticed her annoyance.

Or maybe she does, and she’s just doing it out of spite? Ripple wouldn’t know.

Top Speed took out her cellphone and showed Ripple the local News site.

“Have you seen this post?”

It was a post on *N-City News*, one of the more popular and credible news sources of the city. Ripple read the article,

Sightings of Magical Girls Match Certain Items and Outfits from Popular Social Game Magical Girl Raising Project. Connections Possible?

Ripple shrugged,

“So they started to connect the dots. Is this a problem?”

Without warning, Fav appeared from behind her,

“*Whaaaaat*!? Of *COURSE* it’s a problem, Pon!”

Fav was frantic, floating around in circles.

“If word ever got out of your actual identities, or if Magical Girl information ever got leaked to the outside, that’s *super* dangerous, Pon!”

His sparkling effects started to clump up the ground.

“Even worse is the fact that *N-City News* is the one reporting this! Don’t they realize that they’re one of the networks that actually advertises our social game!? What kind of business response is this, Pon!?”

Hearing business advice from a black and white sphere. Not the strangest thing Ripple’s heard in her life.

Since she became a Magical Girl, Ripple probably is a bit more resistant to strange happenings, anyways. She still remembered the first time she transformed, and what an experience that was for her.

That was actually just two months ago.
Two months ago, Kano Sazanami became a Magical Girl.

It’s said that 1 in 10,000 people have a chance of becoming a real Magical Girl. Still, that was just an urban legend. Kano knew that.

For most of her life, she had been quite the troublesome girl.

Ever since kindergarten, she tends to pick fights with people who insult her. She got into a lot of trouble for being a bit too aggressive. This behavior continued on to high school.

Eventually, she, her mom, and her step-dad moved out of their house and into an apartment.

Her part-time job was always so focused and serious. She needed to work hard in order to provide for herself, and for her future.

With the mundane boringness of work, she had to have a hobby to distract herself.

When it comes to hobbies and side activities, Kano Sazanami had a principle.

“Don’t waste any money on hobbies.”

Kano’s hobbies at the time included reading. Both manga and books in the library.

Eventually, she saved up enough money to buy a cheap smartphone. With all the competition in the smartphone industries, there was bound to be an economically-priced one sooner or later.

With that smartphone came Kano’s new hobby. A game called the *Magical Girl Raising Project*.

There were a lot of allegedly free choices for social games on the app store. Most of them were free on start, but in reality, if you wanted to actually progress in those games, you’d have to pay money.

But *Magical Girl Raising Project* was different.

It was a social game that was truly free-to-play. Not only that, it didn’t seem to have the “buy to win” mentality that these kinds of titles tend to have. Kano could easily play the game without spending a single Yen.

She first heard of the game at school. She overheard a couple of her classmates talking about it. The comments ranged from “childish” to “pretty fun”. So she decided to try it out for herself.

The game itself was simple. First, you designed your own avatar for your player character, the Magical Girl in the game.

Then, you complete quests to gain items, which ranged from cards that give you more spells or items and gear that increase your stats, just like any good RPG.

Defeating monsters earns you *Magical Candy*, which is basically the in-game currency. You use the candy to level up your Magical Girl or buy new items from the store.

You get stronger in the game to face stronger enemies, and the cycle repeats. A simple but effective formula.

The best part is that there was practically no fee associated with it. Everything is obtainable in-game. Also, even though it was a social game at its core, it was completely possible to spend the entire game in single player.

Kano didn't even mind that the game's aesthetic was a childlike Magical Girl game.

There was a time, back when Kano was younger, that she would watch TV and laugh along with the Magical Girl shows in the past.

About a week after she bought the game, something strange happened.

The mascot character, Fav, suddenly began to look directly at her. He went to the center of the screen and he spoke.

"Congratulations, Pon! You have been chosen to be a *real* Magical Girl!"

Kano was a bit confused. She waited for some sort of event to happen, or maybe a *skip* dialogue button.

Suddenly, her cellphone emitted a bright light, and Kano was covered in it.

The world around her felt like it melted into a new one. Not just that, her clothes seemed to have morphed into different ones.

She had become her in-game avatar. She had become the character she designed. She had become Ripple.

Kano looked at her hands, she looked at her feet. She looked at her face through her phone's reflection.

After that, she lightly pinched her cheek. It still hurts like normal. This wasn't a hallucination.

She tried to find a normal conclusion. She must've been tired after school and work. Not a condition she would want.

But still, how can she explain *this*?

She just transformed into a Magical Girl. She's already confirmed that she's awake. She even recognizes this costume. It's the clothes and outfit she specifically picked out as her avatar.

There is no other explanation.

She has physically transformed into Ripple, and it wasn't a dream.

Kano balled up her right hand into a fist. She used her right hand to strike at her left hand, while palming the oncoming fist.

Her strength seemed normal to her, but she still hasn't fully tested it yet.

Behind her was a glass pane. She stood up and, again, palmed up her right hand into a fist.

Swiftly, she struck the glass pane. Normally, Kano would've hurt her knuckles doing that. The glass was too thick for Kano Sazanami to break. However, for Ripple, it felt like tearing through paper.

Her strength was incredible. She felt reborn.

She then tried to jump. She lightly crouched a bit, prepared to do a normal jump, then kicked both her legs upwards, and jumped.

Her head hit the ceiling.

The ceiling boards cracked, and some small bits of rubble fell down to the floor. Her landlord is not going to be happy about this.

Something else interested Kano. She didn't feel any pain from those incidents. Normally, she would, but there were no bruises or scars on her skin.

In fact, if she looked closely, nothing outwards has changed. Her skin is still the same soft skin that normal people have. Her hair is perfectly normal. Even her costume, as extravagant as it is, feels like normal.

It's just that her inner strength and abilities seem to have grown somehow.

She looked human, but clearly she wasn't. She was something *more*.

So the rumors *were* true. *Magical Girl Raising Project*. That game really *can* create real life Magical Girls.

She looked around for a full-body mirror, and when she did, she was stunned at her own reflection.

While it's still unquestionably her, it was also so much more.

Beautiful. Amazing. Cool. Words that she can use to describe what she looked like right now. She saw herself not as Kano Sazanami, but as Ripple, the Magical Girl.

She couldn't help but start making poses. She posed in front of the mirror, feeling really giddy and happy about herself. Then she found the Kunai and Shurikens in her belt. She posed with them too.

But still, she didn't feel like the ideal Magical Girl, even if this was still super cool to her.

"What're you up to, Pon?" said Fav from her cellphone.

Ripple jumped, startled. She looked at the phone. Fav was giggling as he stared at her awkward poses in front of the mirror.

Her face went bright red. She got embarrassed, but quickly gained her composure enough to begin talking in a normal voice again.

"Who… are *you*?"

"Me? Fav is Fav, Pon! If you played the game this much, you should know who I am, Pon!"

"No, I know *who* you are, that's not what I mean. I mean… What are you supposed to be, exactly? What are you doing?"

"Oh? You can think of Fav as your helper! Your personal assistant! If you have any questions about being a Magical Girl, I'd be happy to answer them, Pon!"

He's implying there's more than one Magical Girl.

Of course, how could she forget that she can't have been the first one.

"I see. So… *A being of beauty that far surpasses this world*. That's what the game said, right?"

"What's wrong? Not satisfied with how you look, Pon?"

"No, that's not what I'm saying."

Kano's avatar was *Ripple*. She designed her to be her definition of a cool ninja girl. Because she was supposed to be a ninja, most of her outfit was colored black.

Kano had black hair in real life, so she also made Ripple to have black hair. She thought a traditional ninja costume would be too boring, so she had designed what was a mixture of a Kimono and a swimsuit.

She still thought it looked too mundane, so then she gave her avatar a ponytail. Naturally, she'd need some kind of hairband to hold it, and keeping with the ninja theme, she made it so that it'd be a gigantic Shuriken.

Now it looks like a fantasy character. Still, something seemed off to Kano. It was the all-black color scheme. Too bland. She gave Ripple a gigantic red scarf. Dual colors, a good design choice, she thought.

This was Ripple. Not exactly a Magical Girl design, but one of a Ninja.

When Kano decided to name her Avatar, she didn't try to make it super difficult. Her last name, Sazanami, translated to Ripple in English, so that's what she named herself in the game.
At the time, she thought it was cool to have an Eastern-style Ninja with a Western-style name like Ripple.

Now though, she thought that this wasn't the ideal Magical Girl look.

"…So, can I change my costume?"

"Now? Sorry, but it's permanent after this, Pon!"

"Ah, I see…"

"What's wrong? Not satisfied with your costume, Pon?"

"It's not that…"

Fav continued to explain to Ripple about her newfound role. As a Magical Girl, she was chosen to help others who are in need and in trouble.

Ripple, however, was not too interested in doing something like that.

Although the powers that she got are amazing, and she really did enjoy being a Magical Girl, the truth is, in her daily life, Ripple was not doing so well. She can't imagine making time to help others as well as herself.

“Don’t you worry too much, Pon! With Fav’s support and your brand new Magical Phone! We’ll get you saving people in no time, Pon!”

“Support? What do you mean?”

“Well, if you need to communicate with your other Magical Girl allies, I’ll relay it for you, Pon! Not to mention, I’ll also answer any questions you have about Magical Girls, Pon!”

“Okay… So, my first question. What’s a Magical Girl?”

“Magical Girls are Magical Girls, Pon! Don’t you watch TV? There’s a bunch of Anime about them, Pon!”

“I *know* what a Magical Girl is, I just thought that real life might not be as simple as what they have on TV. What exactly *am* I?”

“Oh, I get it, Pon. Hmm, well, the best explanation is that you’re a girl who’s assigned magical abilities from the Land of Magic in order to help people, Pon! Simple right?”

“*No*! Not simple! What magic? Why me? What’s this *Land of Magic*?”

“Have you *never* watched TV, Pon?”

“What kind of an answer is *that*? Start from the beginning!”

“Okay, Pon! Well, let’s just assume you know nothing. Firstly, you should know that this decision to make you a Magical Girl is *final*, Pon! No turning back now, Pon!”

That sounds very suspicious.

There was simply no way for Kano to be able to properly act as a Magical Girl. She had a future to think about. She wanted to go to college. If she’s caught up in all of this, it’d be impossible.

More importantly, it didn’t seem like she can say no to all of this.

Was this based on luck? Was there some sort of talent that determined you were a Magical Girl?

Kano had no idea what the reasons were, but for now, she just nodded and listened.

That was always what Kano was like. She considered herself a realist, but she also wasn't easily shaken.

Something as otherworldly as this happening to her might startle her in the beginning, but she was always quick to pick up the pace and go with the flow. It's how she's always lived her life. Still, as much as she doesn't want to be a Magical Girl, she'll have to find some way of balancing it.

Fav seemed to have picked up on this.

"So, I take it you're not interested, Pon? Unfortunately, you don't really have a choice on this one, Pon!"

Fav then continued to explain about the details further. What caught Kano's attention, however, was what Fav said next.

"You're going to get a Mentor, Pon! A veteran Magical Girl will personally teach you all you need to know!"

Oh no.

Kano didn't like that.

Kano thought most people were annoying.

She was never good at communicating with people in general. It's the communicating part that gets her, really.

In the game, she just used tutorials and self-taught herself. She never needed to ask anyone about anything.

She especially had a problem with leader figures. She didn't like it when someone tried to control someone else.

Basically, she hated dealing with people. That's why she played *Magical Girl Raising Project* in the first place.

There is absolutely no way she would be okay with any form of *human interaction* at all.

That's when she appeared. The supposed Mentor to Ripple.

The Magical Girl known as *Top Speed*.

Ripple's first thoughts when seeing Top Speed were "Idiot" and "Annoying".

From her outfit alone, Ripple has already determined that she's going to be tiresome to deal with.

A witch hat, a magical broomstick, a black witch outfit. She's the very definition of a classical witch.

Then there's the huge blue eyes, the blonde hair, with gigantic braids flowing down her shoulder at the back. Not to mention that oh-so-confident smile.

She had a small bag that hung from her neck. It might as well have 'My opinion doesn't matter' written on it, thought Ripple.

Her broomstick was also not quite a broomstick. Occasionally it was, but when she begins riding it, the front part turns into a Motorcycle. Complete with bike handle and Muffler on the back.

'*Oh god, no*' was all that went through Ripple's head.

Ripple's opinion of Top Speed just went down.

Then, the witch girl spoke.

"Yo! Nice to meetcha! Name's Top Speed!"

"…Hi"

"So, you like steamed rice? I love 'em, hahaha!"

'*She just said 'Yo', and her speech patterns are annoying*'.

Ripple's opinion of Top Speed just sank lower.

Top Speed began to sat down, and even invited Ripple to sit next to her. Ripple didn't want to, though. She prefers to just stand and lean while Top Speed continues to talk about the basics of Magical Girls.

Top Speed explained a lot of things. The basics of what Magical Girls were, and that their purpose was to help others.

She also said that by helping people, Magical Girls can collect these things called *Magical Candies*.

“So you help people to get these… candies?”

“In the game, you get them by defeating enemies, right? Well, tough luck. Real life doesn’t have those enemies for you to beat up.”

As Top Speed continued to explain with a face that looks like she knows a lot, Ripple listened, though her opinion of Top Speed still hasn’t changed.

Top Speed then showed her how to use her Magical Phone. She told her that it’s only accessible by Magical Girls, and no normal person could use it. Still, the way you operate it is no different than operating a regular smartphone.

Ripple browsed her Magical Phone and found her Personal Page.

Top Speed said that it was specially designed for each Magical Girl.

Ripple looked at the information displayed within the page.

It showed her almost everything about her. Her height and weight had changed. Although Ripple certainly didn’t feel it while transforming, she apparently grew slightly taller.

Her new height is about 175 cm as Ripple. That’s a little taller than the average Japanese male. Ripple looked at the category marked *Personality*.

Prone to violent outbursts when provoked.

For some reason that statement pissed her off. I guess they got that part perfectly.

Finally, she reached the column marked *Magical Skill*. On it, was a description of Ripple’s unique ability that only she can perform.

Will never miss a target when throwing Shurikens.

“Huh? That’s it?”

“What’s up?” asked Top Speed.

“There’s… There’s only 1 Magical Skill.”

Top Speed merely nodded and shrugged. Ripple’s eyes widened.

“What!? But in the game you had a ton of Magical Skills! That was the point! You’d upgrade your abilities, gain cards to get new powers, and level up!”

“Not the case in real life, sadly,” replied Top Speed disappointingly.

Ripple remembered her character in the game. She built her up as an ultimate Ninja. Mainly focusing on fire-based spells. Now, when she finally becomes a real Magical Girl, she only has access to Shuriken?

Ninjas are already behind on technology, but a power that just lets you always hit your targets with your Shurikens is just a bit… weak?

Seeing Ripple in disappointment, Top Speed chimed in and continued explaining the basics of Magical Girls.

“Kay, so it looks like you’re gonna need a crash course, alright? Couple of rules to take note of. Rule number 1, *Magical Girls should never reveal their identity to the public*. Got it?”

Made sense. They’d be a target if people knew who they really were.

“Rule number 2, *Magical Girls don’t talk about any of these things to the public*. That means all of this, how this happens, the process. None. Nada. Zilch. Got it?”

Ripple nodded. If there were any previous Magical Girls, they must’ve followed these rules strictly. Ripple had never seen one in person, and most of their sightings were rumors or first-hand accounts.

Still, she couldn’t help satisfy her curiosity.

“What happens if you break these rules?”

“Then you get kicked out of the Magical Girl club. You’re done. You go home. There’s probably more, but I wouldn’t know. I haven’t broken any of those rules yet,” said Top Speed.

Based on those words, Ripple thought that maybe there just *might* be a way out of being a Magical Girl. Would she take it though? If she broke these rules, she's not just endangering herself, but the other Magical Girls as well.

"There *is* one more thing I gotta tell ya, Ripple."

"Hm?"

"At the end of the week, on the Saturday, there's a *Magical Girl Chat* that's hosted by Fav. You'll receive a notification and invite on your Magical Phone. It's kind of like a chatroom! It's not *mandatory*, but being there could earn you lots of new contacts and info and all that. Give it a shot if you've got time!"

She explained so much so fast. Top Speed wasn't just fast on her feet; she was fast on her mouth too.

That was their relationship two months ago. Now… not much has changed.

Present day, in front of the 7-story building that Ripple jumped off from. Top Speed was talking to Ripple about some news in town, just like how she explained the basics of being a Magical Girl to her 2 months ago.

"Some Magical Girls have set up *huge* territories recently. Not sure what's up with *them*, really. Still, it's best you should know about it."

What Top Speed said was true. Some of the Magical Girls have claimed districts that they were supposed to be protecting as their own territory.

Several Magical Girls have tried to communicate with them to no avail.

"Calamity Mary's all set up in the red-light district. She's got a few screws loose upstairs, if you know what I mean. Ruler's personally taken over the Western District. *That* girl is a bag of cats. You're never quite gonna know what you're gonna get when you talk to her."

Calamity Mary. She's always been unhinged, but Ripple knew just how dangerous she was.

A couple of weeks ago, the Peaky Angels, twin Magical Girls, posted a video showing Sister Nana, another Magical Girl, nearly being shot to death by Calamity Mary for 'entering her territory'.

Luckily enough, she managed to escape. Still, the damage had been done.

The outrage that the other girls had was nearly unanimous. Everyone agreed that Calamity Mary was bad news.

As for Ruler, she hasn't been trouble by herself, but she's still someone to look out for. Like Top Speed said, she's unpredictable. She could be your greatest ally or your worse enemy.

If Ruler had personally claimed a district to be hers, it would be wise to stay clear of it for the time being.

"Hey, Ripple! Still there? Earth to Ripple! You listenin' buddy?"

Right. Top Speed was still talking.

"Anyways, the gist of what I was saying. Stay *away* from those districts, alright? You've only been at this for two months. These guys are dangerous and experienced. Don't try to be a hero, alright?"

"…Yeah. I got it."

"Awesome! Listen, I gotta jet. I'll catch you later, alright! Stay safe and eat up! Don't want you getting' all skin and bones on me, heh!"

With that, Top Speed went on her broomstick and left, zooming out until she became a dot in the night sky, and disappeared entirely.

With Top Speed gone, it was just Fav and Ripple.

"Well… That was a lot of info."

"Personally, if that was me, I would've just condensed it all, Pon! That took about 3 times longer than it should have to explain, Pon!"

"Yeah. She does get carried away sometimes. Still, at least I'm up to date with everything."

There's one thing that Ripple did respect about Top Speed.

Even though she doesn't have to, Top Speed would often go out of her way to check up on Ripple and inform her of the latest news and updates.

The routine check-ups sometimes annoyed Ripple, but the fact that Top Speed took some time out of her day to check up on her… That was nice of her.

Ripple rarely joined the weekend Magical Girl chats, and Top Speed always relayed the messages and important things to her anyway, so Ripple would never be left in the dark.

Last week, Top Speed even brought lunch for Ripple. She tends to cook her own food. That's one of Top Speed's hobbies. Again, it was unnecessary, but appreciated.

In the two months of their Mentor/Student relationship, Ripple's opinion of Top Speed has increased slightly.

Instead of *Idiot Mentor*, Top Speed was now *Mentor, but still an idiot*. That might not sound so different, but it's a higher opinion than Ripple had the first time.

Kugehama District. Named for Kuge Beach. It's a district located around the shorelines of N-City.
In the Summer, tourists often flock to the beaches in search of sun and fun. Near Autumn, however, when the days get colder, there are less people. Conversely, the streets are less crowded as well.

On a hill overlooking one of the many beaches of the district, there is a conspicuously large steel tower.

Above this tower, are two Magical Girls, sitting side by side.

One is dressed in a white school uniform. Large flowers stacked on her skirt.

The other is dressed much like a medieval knight, but with what appears to be a tail extending from the back of her outfit.

Both of them were talking to Fav, who was on-screen in their Magical Phones.

The steel tower was a perfect meeting spot for these two. For one thing it was abandoned and looked quite ugly. Nobody paid much attention to it.

Since nobody ever came nearby, the two would easily be able to sit on its tallest point and just have nice chats.

Which is good, because actually getting to the top of the steel tower was often quite tiring.

Not all Magical Girls can fly, but the ones that can have to use a lot of energy to maintain their flight.

The ones that can't fly are forced to run up the side of the steel tower if they even want to get up here. The interiors are already quite unstable as it is.

Luckily, they're Magical Girls. Their abilities far surpass normal human beings.

"I've got a bad feeling about the next Weekend Chat, Pon!"

"What's wrong, Fav?"

"I heard there's a big announcement. They said that a new Magical Girl will join us. Is that right, Fav?"

"Well… let's just say a pretty *big* event is coming, Pon!"

"What kind of big event?"

"…Have a nice day, Pon!"

"Great."

Snow White turned off her Magical Phone. She had been sitting straight this whole time. She began to stretch her arms a bit, then leaned a bit to the right, just next to the other Magical Girl.

The other Magical Girl's name was La Pucelle. A Magical Girl dressed like a knight. She had a protective look about her. Soft features, yet her stance shows that she's ready to fight when needed.

Snow White scooched a little closer to La Pucelle, and tapped her on the shoulder.

“Hey, Sou-Chan, Sou-Chan! Did you hear what Fav just said?” said Snow White.

“Yeah, I heard it,” answered La Pucelle, still somewhat annoyed at Fav’s response.

“What do you think of all this?” asked Snow White.

“There’ve been less and less people joining the chats lately. I think Fav’s trying to increase chat participation.”

“I didn’t notice that there were less people.”

“Definitely a small amount. Last week, we only had 7 people join the chat. You, me and Nemurin were there. Then Clamberry. Top Speed was also in the chat, since she’s a regular. Then there’s Sister Nana and Winterprison.”

The weekly Magical Girl chats have been getting fewer participants lately. Every time a new Magical Girl is created, their mentors and Fav always stated the same thing.

Magical Girls were told to attend the Weekend Chat. While it’s not mandatory, it’s highly recommended.

Fav tells them that not only is it a chance to gather information, but to also make connections with other Magical Girls, and to unite with the power of friendship to protect the world.

When he puts it like that, not a lot of people are going to take it seriously. Add that to the fact that participation is not mandatory and only recommended, and people start dropping out of the Weekend Chats soon enough.

Some Magical Girls attend the chats. These were usually the more responsible or sociable ones.

Snow White and La Pucelle has always attended the chats in high frequency, and only ever missed them when something really urgent comes up.

These two love Magical Girls, so they wouldn’t hesitate for a chance to talk with other Magical Girls in the chat.

Since they became Magical Girls, they’ve made friends with most of the other ones as well. To them, the chats are a great way to catch up with each other.

Even so

“Have to admit, though. Sometimes the chats do wind up talking in circles with just the same people. Also, it’s a little cramped as it is, now.”

Unlike normal chatrooms, the Weekend Magical Girl chats took place in a virtual reality. The Magical Phones would transport the girls to this virtual reality. Their surroundings would start to look much like a meeting room.

Within this reality, the girls had their bodies deformed into chibi-forms of their Avatars.

“Personally, standing around bunched up tightly in a room with a bunch of other people? Not comfortable at all.”

“But, *Sou-Chan*!”

“Hey, now!”

La Pucelle put her index finger to her mouth and shushed Snow White. Snow White looked at her friend confused.

“Don’t call me ‘Sou-Chan’ when I’m dressed like this. I’m La Pucelle, remember?”

“Oh… Oh right, haha! Sorry, Sou-Chan”

She called her Sou-Chan anyway.

“Oops, I did it again, hahaha!”

Snow White burst out laughing but tried to hold it in. La Pucelle also couldn’t help but laugh along, while shoving her friend’s shoulder playfully.

Koyuki Himekawa had always wanted to be a Magical Girl.

Ever since she was a little girl, she’d been dazzled by Magical Girl Anime shows.

Hiyoko-Chan was one of her favorites. Every day she’d watch it on TV. She’d cry if Hiyoko-Chan was in trouble, and would cheer whenever she would save the day.

She watched a lot of Magical Girl shows like *Star Queen* and *Cutie Princess*.

She didn't even stop there. Magical Girl shows that were way before she was born was considered too. She'd borrow the Anime DVDs from her parents. Shows like *Mary-Chan*, *Rikkabelle*, and *Miko-Chan* were all she watched as a kid.

She was fascinated by these girls who fought evil for justice.

They were happy and excited with their Magic. They never let any trouble bring them down. They were inspirations.

She had wished to become a Magical Girl when she grew up.

She remembered a childhood friend who was jealous of that. He wanted to be a Magical Girl too, but he didn't think he could, since he was a boy.

Almost everyone at school thought that Magical Girls were childish things, but Koyuki kept wanting to be one in her heart.

She didn't think of Magical Girls as just another work of fiction. She considered Magical Girls to be an ideal.

For her, a Magical Girl is someone who has the power to make everyone around them happy, and to help them for a good cause.

Even though she didn't talk about it much at school, she kept that belief in her heart. Incidentally, when she went to Middle School, she was introduced to the social game, *Magical Girl Raising Project*.

She had heard of the rumors, of course. Everyone has.

They say that if you play the game, there's a chance that it might turn you into a real Magical Girl.

It didn't take much to convince Koyuki to give it a shot.

But what if it's just rumors?

What if it doesn't happen to me?

And… even if it's true, what if I'm not lucky?

These were thoughts that went through Koyuki's head as she wondered if she should play the game.

However, even if the rumors were false, the game itself was already appealing as it is.

For one thing, it had Magical Girls. For another, it was completely free to play. The gameplay also looked pretty fun, too!

So, even if Koyuki wasn't chosen, she could still at least enjoy the game.

So she got the app and started playing. She started the game, saw a *Start* button visualized with a green heart symbol, and never stopped playing.

About a month later, Koyuki Himekawa became a Magical Girl.

She had transformed into her Avatar, a Magical Girl that she dreamed of becoming since she was a little girl.

She had transformed into Snow White.

Snow White wasn't just a dream to her. When she was younger, she constantly drew herself as *Snow White, the Magical Girl*.

The one in the game wore a white school uniform, similar but not the same as the school uniform she wore in Middle School. Snow White also had lots of flowers in her skirt.

Just like her namesake, Snow White's skin was as pure white as the snow, impossibly so. Her hair was golden, reflecting the innocent nature that Koyuki believed Magical Girls to have.

When Koyuki looked at herself in the mirror that day, she saw her dream turn into a reality.

When most people are given this situation, they tend to think they're dreaming or in some hallucination. Not Koyuki.

Although it *seemed* unrealistic, she had always held on to the belief that she would be a Magical Girl. So while the circumstances are outlandish, to her, this was something that she easily processed.

She jumped up in joy when she heard the news that she was chosen.

She transformed back to her human form. Nervous that it was all just a dream. Then she transformed again into her Magical Girl form, and there she was, as Snow White.

“Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh!!! It’s *real*!!!”

“Congratulations, Pon!”

“Aaaah!!! Thank you, thank you, thank you *sooo* much for choosing me, Fav!!! I can’t express how happy I am, right now! Here’s to a brighter future!”

Koyuki spent the whole day grinning after that. Her parents were a bit confused, but otherwise glad that their daughter was having a good time.

Since then, Koyuki would often sneak out of the house at night.

She’d go to her backyard to practice becoming a Magical Girl.

She tried out so many of her new abilities. Flying, backflips, high jumps, kicks, punches, double somersaults.

She could do so much more than she could as a human.

But most importantly. She wanted to try out the ultimate ability as a Magical Girl.

“Fav, do I have any kind of magical powers?”

“Hm? Oh! You should check your Personal Page, Pon! It has everything recorded about you, including you *Magical Skill*, Pon!”

Snow White turned on her Magical Phone. She scrolled through to her own Personal Page. She saw the various statistics recorded for her.

“Hey, Fav?”

“Yes,Pon?”

“What’s this mean here?”

“That’s your *Personality* status, Pon!”

“*Delusions of grandeur*? *Clumsy and careless*? Oh, but it also says that I *Have a strong sense of justice*”

“Well… sometimes people can’t handle the truth about themselves, Pon! It’s only the objective facts, Pon!”

Snow White grumbled a bit, but relented. She guessed that it kind of describes her. She just wished it wasn’t in that way.

She moved on to the column marked *Magical Skill*.

“The ability to hear the voices of people in trouble!”

She read it out loud. She was excited. This was the *perfect* Magical Skill for her.

For Koyuki, Magical Girls had to save people in danger. What better way than to know where the people in danger are?

This was a dream come true.

Koyuki thanked the Land of Magic. She thanked them for giving her a chance to live her dream as a Magical Girl, and she thanked them for giving her an ability that can help save the lives of more people.

On that day, Snow White was born, and Koyuki’s activities as Snow White never stopped since. In fact, they keep increasing.

She would escape every night to help out people in trouble.

She helped out a middle school girl who lost her house key, she helped some college students find their stolen bike, even helped a salaryman who was getting mugged.

The first two days in Snow White’s career were the most productive in any Magical Girl’s career.

Thanks to her Magical Skill, and her extreme determination, she was able to collect more Magical Candies than any Magical Girl could ever have in two days.

She hasn't even been taught the full lessons of being a Magical Girl by her mentor.

During her first Weekend Chat, Snow White was greeted warmly by the other Magical Girls.

On her first Weekend Chat, she saw them. The other Magical Girls, dressed in their Avatar's clothing.

The Witch, Top Speed.

The Nun, Sister Nana.

Wearing a long scarf and a coat, Weiss Winterprison.

A pajama-clothed Magical Girl, Nemurin.

A Magical Girl dressed in flowers and a nature-patterned outfit, with Elf ears it seems, Clamberry.

And her. Wearing an outfit that can only be described as a Dragon Knight, La Pucelle.

Top Speed started the chat by recalling her week's experiences. Somehow, she always gets into hilarious situations.

Sister Nana nodded and told the new Magical Girls of her experiences. She's a bit more kinder and had a soft voice.

Nemurin. Although she was a veteran, she's the kind of girl who prefers to listen to other people's problems. She simply smiled and listened.

Winterprison silently stood beside Sister Nana.

Clamberry sat in the corner and began playing her violin, which she somehow materialized in the virtual meeting room. It felt a lot like BGM music.

At the end of the meeting, Snow White got a chance to chat with La Pucelle. They found out that their assigned districts were next door to each other, and so they wanted to meet up.

They agreed on a time and place. Midnight, an abandoned steel tower overlooking one of the beaches in the Kagehama District.

Snow White was excited.

Although she had fulfilled her lifelong dream of being a Magical Girl, she still felt a bit lonely about the whole ordeal. She wanted a friend.

She wanted someone who she can talk to. Not fan, not someone that's inspired by her. She needed another fellow Magical Girl.

She was a bit nervous about showing up. She came as soon as possible, so that she wouldn't be late for the meeting.

She came early, but her guest had already come earlier than her.

Snow White has only ever seen La Pucelle through the Weekend Chat, which is where everyone becomes deformed chibi versions of themselves. To see La Pucelle in the flesh is truly a sight.

Her eyes are fierce. Golden irises. Her face displays a look that says *you don't want to mess with me*.

Her dress- No. Although it may have those qualities, it looks more like a mixture between a dress and battle armor.

Gauntlets in her arms. Large gauntlets. A breastplate. Shin guards. She looks equipped for combat. No, she doesn't just *look* the part, she *does* have a weapon.

Sheathed on her back is a 1-meter length sword. Snow White made an estimate that it was about 40 cm wide. Though it's slightly dark within the night sky, she could see the golden-plated dragon motifs surrounding not just her sword, but her outfit as well.

She had hair ornaments that looked like long horns pointed upwards, and from the back of her skirt, just around the waist, extended what seemed to be a dragon's tail.

She is the very definition of a Dragon Knight.

La Pucelle. To think that someone would be able to mesh the essence of a proud warrior and the cuteness of a Magical Girl so well. If anyone could do it, it was her.

Snow White panicked. She was late. Well, she was early, but she was still late, because her guest was here earlier.

Quickly, she flew up to the top of the steel tower.

When she landed, she saw La Pucelle calmly looking towards the ocean. Perhaps because she noticed that Snow White has arrived, La Pucelle tilted her head and turned towards her.

Snow White, still embarrassed from being late, tried to speak up.

“U-Um… Hi!!! We met before, yesterday, in the chatroom… Except you were tinier, and chubbie- Chibier!!! Because, y’know, we were all Avatars there… Um, yeah, nice to meet you!”

Oh no. Save yourself.

“I uh… I don’t know if you remember me, La Pucelle. We promised to meet up in real life, so this is kind of like, our first time greetings, so yeah!!! Nice to meet you! Hehe, nice to meet you!”

That was the worst greeting Snow White has ever done in her entire life.

Thinking fast, Snow White bowed her head down. When she looked up at La Pucelle’s face, she saw her standing up

La Pucelle smiled, and nodded about three times.

“Heh, I knew it…” muttered La Pucelle under her breath.

Snow White’s face turned red. Did she make a bad impression? Did she ruin her chance for a friendship?

La Pucelle folded her arms and had a smile on her face.

“Koyuki! It’s you, isn’t it?”

Snow White was startled. How did she know her real name? Is it normal for other Magical Girls to do that? No, there’s no way it is. Keeping your identity a secret from the public is supposed to be the number one rule, so how…

“E-excuse me, but… How did you know my name?”

“Because it’s me, Souta!”

“H-huh?”

“Souta Kishibe, from elementary? We went to the same school before we parted ways for a bit. Don’t tell me you forgot about me!”

“…Eh? …EH!? EEEEEEEEEH!?”

Souta Kishibe. Koyuki had nearly forgotten. How could she have forgotten Souta?

Souta went to the same school, and they would hang out. Koyuki would even share her drawings with Souta.

Now it all makes sense.

Souta would know about Koyuki being Snow White, because Koyuki constantly showed her drawings.

The design of Snow White was something Koyuki and Souta both came up with together when they were younger.

Koyuki would always say it was her *Future Dream*. To become Snow White, the Magical Girl. A dream which Souta empathized with.

But, now that that question was answered, there’s another question lingering on Koyuki’s mind.

“Sou-Chan… but… if I remember correctly, weren’t you…”

La Pucelle tensed up.

“A boy?”

Snow White stayed silent. Souta smiled and continued.

“I- I still am. When… When I played the social game, my Avatar was La Pucelle. She’s a girl, as you can tell.”

Souta gave a deep sigh before he continued.

“When you transform into a Magical Girl, your body changes. Sometimes you get taller, sometimes you get shorter, depending on how you made your Avatar. You didn’t change much Koyuki, because you designed her to be just like you. Me… I had no idea they also changed my gender. So, when I’m La Pucelle… I’m female.”

That’s why Koyuki wouldn’t even know that it was Souta, even if he had stayed male in this form.

Souta was a soccer boy. He never expressed any interest in either Magical Girls *or* Dragon Knight type things.

“Sou-Chan… Why did you want to be a Magical Girl?” asked Snow White.

“Well, why do *you* want to be one?”

“I like Magical Girls! That’s why I played the game!”

“Well, I like Magical Girls too, y’know?”

“Really? I didn’t know. You never told me this. You always seemed to be a soccer fan whenever I’m around.”

“That’s… That’s ‘cause I never really told anybody.”

So Souta actually liked Magical Girl shows all this time?

“Koyuki, you ever notice how when you come over to my house, there’s all those hidden books and stuff? Magical Girl manga, Magical Girl light novels. I even have some vintage Magical Girl DVD Anime.”

“So, why didn’t you say so?”

“I… I didn’t wanna deal with all the crap that comes along with admitting that I like Magical Girl stuff. I mean, I’ve already dealt with that once, not a big fan of it.”

Koyuki knew how her friends treated her. For her friends, openly liking things like that was just considered childish.

Souta, who was in the soccer team, probably would’ve gotten bullied, just because he was a boy who liked Magical Girls.

Now Koyuki understood. Everything started to make sense. Why Souta eagerly helped Koyuki design a Magical Girl outfit, why he always seemed to carry a soccer ball everywhere he goes, why he always seemed so secretive.

Souta had moved to a different Middle School compared to Koyuki, though they were close friends in Elementary.

“Sou-Chan, when you would leave early for some extracurricular activities, was that the truth?”

“Er… Well, most of the time I’d go to the store and buy Magical Girl stuff… But sometimes I actually *do* practice soccer! I still like soccer y’know?”

“Hehe, I know, just wondering. Wow… Do you think there are other Magical Girls out there who are actually boys?”

“I did ask that to Fav. He confirmed that it was just me in this city. Who knows? Fav says that it’s a rarity but it *could* happen.”

“So… you actually are *female* when you’re in your Magical Girl form?”

“Yes. Yes, I’m completely female in this form. Absolutely positive.”

As La Pucelle said that, his cheeks blushed a bit.

“Please don’t tell me you’re going to check it. I can assure you that I’m female.”

“N-No no! Haha, It’s nothing like that! I was just wondering, is all”

The two laughed. It was nice to laugh with a friend, joking around like this. Koyuki missed it, and Souta missed it too.

“Listen, Koyuki. If it’s alright with you… When we see other Magical Girls, let’s keep this between us, okay? I’m not Sou-Chan, I’m not a boy. I’m La Pucelle, alright?”

“Sounds fair, Sou-Chan- er, La Pucelle”

“Thanks, Snow.”

La Pucelle then suggested a team-up, to which Snow White agreed. They would form a duo to protect both their districts.

With Snow White's powers being to listen to people's voices who are in trouble, she was able to scout ahead and find whoever's in trouble, no matter where they are.

Meanwhile, La Pucelle's powers were a little more… offensively oriented compared to Snow White's. La Pucelle told Snow White that he would be in a bodyguard role. While he hasn't revealed the nature of his power yet, it's clear that with his sword, he means business

Thus, Snow White and La Pucelle reignited their long dormant friendship, and an unbreakable duo was formed.

MAGICAL GIRL WEEKEND CHAT
PART 1

Once a week, every weekend, the Magical Girls of a city will gather around for a weekly chat.

Although it is not mandatory, it is highly recommended to join this chatroom.

It's very simple. Using a Magical Phone, Magical Girls can enter the virtual chatroom, where they will be rendered into a virtual reality. The room itself takes the form of a meeting room.

The Magical Girls will appear as their Avatars, albeit in a slightly chibi deformed state.

☆ Clamberry has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Magicaroid 44 has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Swim Swim has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Top Speed has entered the Land of Magic

Magicaroid 44: Greetings!
Top Speed: Hiya~
Swim Swim: ♪

☆ Snow White has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Tama has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Nemurin has entered the Land of Magic

Snow White: Evening, everyone! Nice to see you all!
Swim Swim: U Too
Tama: Arf~!

☆ Ripple has entered the Land of Magic

Top Speed: Oho! You actually showed up? Now *this* is an unusual surprise!

☆ La Pucelle has entered the Land of Magic

Nemurin: Hey there! I rarely see you, Ripple
Magicaroid: Good evening, rarely seen person

☆ Ruler has entered the Land of Magic

La Pucelle: Hey everyone

☆ Calamity Mary has entered the Land of Magic

Ruler: Good evening

☆ Sister Nana has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Weiss Winterprison has entered the Land of Magic

Sister Nana: Good evening, everyone! It's nice to see more people here!
Weiss Winterprison: Likewise

☆ Minael has entered the Land of Magic
☆ Yunael has entered the Land of Magic

Calamity Mary: [This message has been censored due to language]
Minael: Hiii~
Yunael: Yaay~

☆ Fav has entered the Land of Magic

While her virtual form was inside the chatroom, Clamberry's real life body was on top of her bed. Well, if you could call it a bed.

She laid down, with the large flowers of her outfit cushioning her head as she lay on her bed. The bed itself was located not in a room, but on top of a roof, underneath the night sky.

She's lying down on an abandoned building within the mountains.

Clamberry never liked civilization, so when she became a Magical Girl, she immediately retreated to the forest. Her full title was *The Forest Musician, Clamberry* after all.

The abandoned building was a run-down hotel resort within the mountains. It's been shut down but not demolished yet. Perfect for a home.

It's been 6 months since Clamberry stepped foot in civilization. Not like she needed to. She got all the news of N-City from her Magical Phone, and Fav was just a touchscreen away whenever a big announcement would come from the Magical Girl side of things.

Actually, Clamberry was impressed. She hadn't seen this small chatroom become filled with all 15 girls in a long time.

Even Ripple, who has never shown up before, has decided to pop in now. Whatever Fav told them worked, and they're all here.

Top Speed: So what's all this about, huh? I heard a new girl's showing up
Fav: She is. But she'll be chosen next week, Pon!
Fav: This week's big announcement has nothing to do with her

Currently, there are 15 Magical Girls in N-City. Next week, with the new girl coming in, that makes 16 Magical Girls in N-City. 16 Magical Girls is a lot of Magical Girls.

The fact of the matter is that the Land of Magic grants these girls extraordinary abilities, and that uses up mana, or the magical energy of the land.

16 Magical Girls all trying to share energy would waste the actual magical energy within the land.

In other words, it'll quickly be depleted.

Fav: Well, it's time for the big announcement, Pon!
Fav: Due to the overflow of Magical Girls in N-City, we've decided to halve the number of Magical Girls, Pon!
Fav: We're going to cut it down to 8 Magical Girls, Pon!

The room went silent. It was as if they all saw a ghost. This was to be expected.

One by one, the Magical Girls started complaining. They began to wonder why this was happening, and even questioned if another Magical Girl should be brought in if this was such a problem.

Fav meanwhile only had a sheepish look in his eyes and constantly kept apologizing to everyone, while bowing.

His words fell on deaf ears, though, as they continued to argue.

Then their arguments turned to curiosity. When they were at first yelling at Fav, now they were questioning him.

Just how is he planning to halve the Magical Girls?

Fav: Good question, Pon! The answer is simple!
Fav: Every week, we'll host a Weekend Chat. The Magical Girl that has the least amount of Magical Candy is eliminated, Pon!
Fav: It's only fair. You do gain Magical Candies from helping others, Pon! So the one with the least is not doing their job, Pon!
Fav: Soon, there will be an update on your Magical Phone, Pon! Keep a close eye on it, Pon! That's all for today. Goodbye, Pon!

With that, Fav left the chatroom.

Clamberry was deep in thought. She had no plans to lose or get eliminated. She had her own personal reasons to stay a Magical Girl.

Ever since she became one, there was no need for other people, or civilization. She was powerful. Strong. She could survive on her own.

To return to being human after a taste of power…

…That was never a good feeling.

She was determined to stay on top.

Clamberry logged out and turned off her Magical Phone.

The days after the Weekend Chat, Magical Girl sightings spiked.

People are seeing more and more Magical Girls every day. There's talks of a Princess travelling with another girl who's dressed as a dog. Twin angels flying in the sky, returning a balloon to a boy. A schoolgirl in a white uniform picking up a large cargo truck that got stuck in the mud.

Magical Girls are trying to increase their activities. They're trying to get more Magical Candies. They don't want to be eliminated.

As a result, people are seeing more Magical Girls, and the Magical Girl websites began to see an increase in traffic.

Posts, images, videos. They're everywhere.

"Hey, Ripple. Whatcha' lookin' at?"

A voice came from behind Ripple.

Ripple was sitting atop the roof of a building, looking at her Magical Phone. She was browsing the Magical Girl site.

Ripple ignored the voice, and continued looking at her phone.

"Hellooo! What're you doing browsing the web at a time like this! Everyone else is busy getting Magical Candies and you're lazing around here!"

Top Speed landed next to Ripple.

She sat down next to her apprentice, and looked at Ripple's phone screen.

"Would ya look at that. Snow White's pretty amazing, isn't she?"

Ripple was looking at sightings of Snow White. *The White Magical Girl*. Mostly looking at comments from eyewitnesses.

She helped me find my lost coins.

She brought me a lunch box that I forgot at home for school.

She stopped by and reminded me that I forgot to zip my pants.

Snow White was doing a lot of work. Not just major work, but small day-to-day things that not many Magical Girls would even bother with.

Top Speed noticed something. Ever since Ripple kept looking at Snow White's page in that website, she's been less reluctant in helping people and doing work. Still, it's not like Ripple would admit it.

Ripple's the type of girl who shows an exterior of being tough, but Top Speed was sure that she had a good heart inside.

Maybe Snow White is a good influence on her?

“Hey, Ripple. Snow White’s pretty cool huh? Is she like… your rival or something?” asked Top Speed.

Ripple glared at her silently.

“Okay, okay! No need to be hostile. Jeez, you’d think I looked like Calamity Mary or something.”

Again, Ripple glared at her.

Calamity Mary.

Only days after Ripple became a Magical Girl, Calamity Mary was something that came into her life.

Ripple and Top Speed were meeting up on the seventh story building. The same building that they always meet up in.

Then, she came.

Approaching them from behind, Calamity Mary. A western-style gunman Magical Girl. She looked like a cowboy from top to bottom.

A ten-gallon cowboy hat, a vest, and pistols holstered at her hips.

She had the looks of a 3rd grade High School student, but she looked like one of those people that you just *knew* would be trouble.

“So… this is Ripple, I take it? Such a young little girl.”

Ripple tensed up at that statement. Already the first meeting and she’s giving off some bad vibes to her.

Calamity Mary eyed Top Speed.

“Fav told me that the next Magical Girl in line for mentorship would be me.”

“Ah! Did he? Well… y’see, I already asked him beforehand that if there was a Magical Girl rookie that got chosen near my district, that I get dibs on her. That’s probably why I got Ripple.”

This was the case. Ripple lived in Nakayado district, which was a part of town with a castle located just in the middle of the district.

Meanwhile, Top Speed was responsible for Kitayado district, just north of Nakayado. Exactly next door.

“Hmm, weird… I told Fav that I made reservations for any Magical Girl that popped up next door. Looks like Fav didn’t bother telling you. Not sure why,” shrugged Top Speed.

“W-What!?”

“Well, what can I say? Not my call. Sorry ‘bout accidentally taking your would-be apprentice from you, Nee-san~”

Calamity Mary glared at Top Speed. Top Speed merely tipped her hat down and bowed apologetically.

Calamity Mary was furious. She looked at Ripple, and only found her staring back at her. Ripple was tense, glaring at Calamity Mary.

In a flash, Calamity Mary removed her pistol from her holster.

Without warning, she fired it at Ripple.

Ripple reacted, quickly unsheathing her Katana from her back.

$1/10^{th}$ of a second. That was all it took. The bullet zipped towards Ripple, but Ripple managed to deflect it with her Katana.

The reflexes of a Magical Girl far surpassed ordinary humans. Any slower and who knows what would’ve happened.

Top Speed stood up in shock.

“Hey! What the hell do you think you’re doing!?”

“Looks like your mentor wasn’t fast enough to see, was she, little girl?”

Ripple was sweating. She knew, even for a handgun, that the shot was too fast. She stared at the pistol that Calamity Mary was holding in her right hand.

There was red smoke coming out of the barrel. It wasn't an ordinary pistol.

Just what was Calamity Mary's Magical Skill?

Top Speed quickly stood between the two girls, and stretched her arms out, protecting Ripple behind her.

"That's *enough*! You're acting like a cranky rookie! What the hell are you *thinking*!? Shooting her as soon as you meet her!?"

As Top Speed shouted at Calamity Mary, she glanced back at Ripple, and whispered in a small voice.

"Get behind me. Now. She's dangerous."

Calamity Mary smirked. She twirled her gun around her fingers. Ripple kept her hand on her Katana. Her fingers still numb and shaky. Top Speed still had a determined look on her face.

The tension was high.

"Okay… everybody just… calm down. We're all friends here, *right*? Fellow Magical Girls, *right*?" said Top Speed rather sternly.

Calamity Mary looked at Ripple in the eye. They both knew that deep down in their heart, they'd become enemies.

Ripple had no idea what Calamity Mary really wanted, but whatever it was, she knew she'd be targeted.

The next time they meet, it won't be as simple as this.

Although they will never be friends, they decided to stand down.

"Well, if that's what you think, Top Speed. Do tell Fav that I said 'hi', okay?"

Calamity Mary began to walk away.

Ripple took a deep breath and sighed. Top Speed was still tense.

Suddenly, Calamity Mary chuckled, and glanced back at Ripple. Ripple's heart skipped a beat.

Without warning, Calamity Mary fired 3 shots at the two girls. 1 shot went towards Top Speed, while the other 2 were aimed towards Ripple.

Ripple wasn't ready, but Top Speed was. She grabbed Ripple by the scarf and quickly dived to the ground. Ripple was startled and let go of her Katana, which clanged as it fell.

By the time Ripple and Top Speed looked up, Calamity Mary was gone.

"You two…"

Top Speed stood up, holding her face. She facepalmed as she looked at where Calamity Mary was before.

"Why the hell did she start shooting *this early*!? I knew she was crazy, but not *that* crazy!"

"…Why didn't you fight back?"

"And endanger the thousands of lives in this city block alone? Do you have any idea how a fight like that would've turned out? That's just *reckless*!"

Ripple was angry. She was furious. Frustrated. She was disappointed at Top Speed for not even trying to fight back.

Ripple believed she had the strength and the power to fight Calamity Mary there and then.

But when she shot her gun without hesitation…

…Ripple was scared.

She was still on the ground. Her heartbeat was rapid. She couldn't stand up. She wanted to cry, but she suppressed it all into hatred and anger.

When she first became a Magical Girl and discovered her newfound abilities, she thought to herself, '*I'm invincible! I can't be killed!*'

This was different.

While no normal human beings could possibly harm them, and they would never die of illness or any random accident.

When a Magical Girl actually wants to hurt another Magical Girl, they can.

Ripple still remembers the numb feeling her hand had when she deflected the bullet. She never wanted to experience that again.

Top Speed looked at Ripple. She noticed her expression immediately.

“You remind me of myself back then, Ripple. Listen, it’s a dangerous job out there, so don’t go out recklessly out there, alright? You know I’m here to help.”

Ripple finally stood up. She folded her arms, and scowled. Still, she did listen to Top Speed’s advice.

Morning. Daylight. The local fast food restaurant. A hamburger shop mostly. It was crowded with people that day.

Still, although there’s lots of commotion, it never bothered anyone in particular. The customers were used to it, and the employees still served them at their most optimal level.

Sitting by the window seat were three Middle School girls.

Two of them were excitedly talking to one another, and the other just silently listened.

“Look, look! There’s more sightings!” said one girl as she showed them what’s on her smartphone.

“Sumi… *again* with the Magical Girls?”

“Hey! It’s not my fault that there’s *way* more sightings of them. Ya-Chan just doesn’t wanna accept it!”

“Sumi, you spend way too much time in dreamland and fantasies”

“I-I *do not*! Look, this is real!”

“How do you know? These are all online comments from people we don’t even know about”

“But the videos-“

“All editable. Really, do you believe everything you see in media, Sumi?”

“No!”

“Hey, y’know in some of those Magical Girl shows, when they transform, they become naked for just a few seconds. You think it’s what happens in real life to these girls too?”

“What!? No! What kind of Magical Girl Anime were *you* watching? And besides, that’s just an Anime!”

“*Exactly*! This is just an online phenomenon. There’s no physical proof”

“But there *is*!”

“Sumi, we really need to get you to appreciate reality a little more”

“You’re the one that doesn’t appreciate reality. I look for what’s interesting in real life, like these Magical Girls”

“This is going nowhere, Sumi”

“Look, look, she’s my favorite. The White Magical Girl”

“Why, what does she do?”

“Apparently she’s the one that’s been seen the most. She helps out everything, and people say she’s dressed like a middle school girl, just like us!!! She seems so down to earth, and she’s super nice. Man… I really wanna meet her”

“Hey, Koyuki. Why are you smiling all alone in the corner there, hm?”
Koyuki blushed and was startled.

“W-Wha!? N-No! I wasn’t smiling at all, hehe.”

It's been 1 week. It's time now. Clamberry had waited for this moment. The decisive day when she would know who would be eliminated.

She had been monitoring the activities of the other Magical Girls from the websites. She knew they were all active during this week. They were all playing the game.

She also played, of course. There was no way she was going to stay behind in this race.

As usual, she logged in to her Magical Phone, then went to the chatroom.

Once again, the meeting was actually full. All 15 girls were in attendance. A rarity.

Everyone was silent. They were nervously anticipating the announcement of the eliminations.

Clamberry took her spot in the corner of the virtual room. Patiently waiting.

Then, Fav began.

He congratulated every one of them for managing to become so active in the past week. He told them he was proud of all these Magical Girls. He told them that he was sad to see one of them go.

Then, he begun the announcements.

"So, as promised. The Magical Girl with the *least* amount of candies will be eliminated from the group, Pon!"

Everyone was quiet. Clamberry was waiting.

"The girl with the least amount of candies is…"

"…**Nemurin**, **Pon!**"

Nemurin.

She's the girl with the pajama avatar. It makes sense that she wouldn't be the one to collect the most.

For most of her career she had been a good listener. Though she did encourage people, she could never actively help them out, herself.

She simply let other people talk out their problems with her, and she would happily listen and lend an ear, maybe even give you some advice.

If that was the only thing she could do, she can't possibly outpace the more active Magical Girls.

Everyone was shocked, some were sad. Magical Girls had a strong bond with each other.

Top Speed and Sister Nana especially came up to Nemurin. Clamberry could see some tears running down their cheeks as they hugged Nemurin.

They said their goodbyes to her, and Nemurin simply smiled and hugged them back.

Snow White also said her goodbyes to Nemurin, and wished that they could meet some other time.

Nemurin told everyone that she'd cheer them from the sidelines, and would never forget her friends.

And once everyone was done with their farewells, Fav spoke.

"Well then, goodbye, Nemurin! It was great while it lasted! Nice knowing ya, Pon! Bye-Bye!"

Nemurin's avatar then disappeared from the virtual room.

One by one the Magical Girls left the meeting room. Until there were only two people left. Clamberry and Fav.

Clamberry stood up and looked at Fav.

Fav: What's up, Pon?
Clamberry: I probably shouldn't ask, but I will
Fav: You have a question, Pon?
Clamberry: I do
Fav: Well, it's my job of answering, Pon! Ask away, Pon!
Clamberry: Alright. So, tell me
Clamberry: What happens when a Magical Girl gets eliminated?
Fav: What do you think happens, Pon?

Fav: They get eliminated
Clamberry: Eliminated. Is that a metaphor?
Fav: Nope, Pon!
Fav: Eliminated
Clamberry: Spit it out
Fav: Eliminated. Definition: You cease to exist, Pon
Clamberry: So, you're saying… they die
Fav: Their body stops functioning, Pon. Once they stop being a Magical Girl, they stop living, Pon!

Clamberry had a blank stare at Fav.

She logged out of the chatroom without saying another word.

She looked at the chat logs. Sure enough, her conversation with Fav was recorded there. Soon, other Magical Girls would see it.

Soon, they'll understand the true implications of this game.

This revelation changes *everything*.

Clamberry put her Magical Phone away. She lay on her bed, and had her arms folded behind her head as she simply stared into the night sky.

CHAPTER 2
THE PRINCESS IN THE CASTLE

Magical Girls and humans are not the same. They are two entirely different creatures.

A Magical Girl is a human, yet humans are not Magical Girls.

A human becomes a Magical Girl. They become something more, something that surpasses themselves.

Magical Girls are human, yet at the same time, Magical Girls are more than human.

Thus, a human can choose to sacrifice their humanity to become more. To become a Magical Girl. As they are ascending their capabilities, this is possible.

However, should a Magical Girl choose to give up their capabilities, then they sacrifice their very life.

A Magical Girl cannot return to being human, as they are already human. Thus, to cease to be a Magical Girl…

…is to cease to be human.

“If you stop being a Magical Girl, then the result is simple. You’re going to die, Pon!”

“That’s why I’m telling you I don’t want to be one anymore! I want to go back to being normal if it means I won’t die!”

“I *told* you it’s impossible, Pon! Quitting is the same thing as stopping. You’re going to die anyways, Pon!”

“So there’s no way out?”

“From the moment you were birthed, you were destined to become a Magical Girl! A warrior fighting for justice, Pon! You were never discouraged before! This is a battle like any other! One you’ll win with strength, smarts, and courage, Pon! Remember the excitement of winning against the strong, Pon!”

Snow White turned off her Magical Phone. She stopped communicating with Fav.

Earlier, she had checked out the chat logs between Fav and Clamberry. That’s when she found out the true consequences of being eliminated from this competition.

She had never wanted to ask Fav this before, but finally she did.

She was determined to quit being a Magical Girl if it means that there’s a chance she will die.

But according to Fav, if she quits being a Magical Girl, it’s the same as dying regardless.

Why hadn’t he told them all this before? This isn’t why she agreed to try her best in the competition.

Snow White sighed.

She can’t reveal to anyone that she’s a Magical Girl. Doing so would mean she has decided to quit, and quitting means death.

She can’t talk to her friends, and she can’t talk to her family.

There’s nobody out there to talk to besides the other Magical Girls.

Just a day after the chat, Snow White noticed a small obituary posted on the local newspaper.

A 24-year old woman had died. Her name was Nemu Sanjou. The cause of death had been a sudden heart attack. The time of death was the time the Weekend Chat stopped.

The woman had no chronic diseases or any other previous illnesses. The name matched. The time matched. The conditions might as well match.

This was the real identity of Nemurin.

So it is true. You really do die.

Snow White looked up at the moon. From the steel tower that she usually hangs out in, it felt so peaceful.

In the distance, there was a fishing boat out at sea. Whoever was piloting it probably had no idea of what’s going on.

Snow White thought back to her previous talk with Fav. She’d never felt so angry and scared in her life.

She was disappointed in herself. She wasn’t thinking of anyone else. Nemurin had died, and all she could think about was protecting herself. What kind of Magical Girl is she?

But still, she didn’t want to die.

Tears streamed down her cheek. Her heart felt empty.

She didn’t want to die.

She didn’t want to die.

She didn’t want to die.

She’s afraid of dying.

Suddenly, someone approached her on that steel tower. It was La Pucelle, and he was carrying his own Magical Phone.

He sat next to her.

“Hey! What’re you up to?”

“Oh, y’know… I’m doing stuff”

“What kind of stuff?”

A ringing noise sounded on Snow White’s phone. The noise sounded like an RPG leveling up sound.

“Uh, hang on. Did you hear that?” asked Snow White.

“Mhm… Check your phone.”

Snow White checked on her phone. As usual, the home screen displayed the basics.

Time of day. Date. Temperature. Magical Candy amount-

“Huh…?”

Snow White’s Magical Candy amount seemed to have decreased from last she remembered. It decreased by half.

“Wha- Where’s my Magical Candy?”

La Pucelle couldn’t help laughing.

“Relax, relax. I’ll give ‘em back. Just messing with you”

The RPG level up noise was heard again, and Snow White saw the Magical Candy amount on her phone rose back to her original amount.

“What… What’s going on?”

“Fav didn’t tell you? Our Magical Phones got a new update. We can share Magical Candies now.”

“This is… um, wow! This could actually help”

“Yeah… too bad about the timing though.”

Snow White looked at La Pucelle. He was staring intently. Still saddened about the fact that someone had died.

She could feel the rage and anger in his face.

The Dragon Knight. She had never seen him fight, but she could tell that at this moment, La Pucelle would be willing to fight the one responsible.

“Hey, Sou-Chan. You wanna go do this thing? Get enough Magical Candies?”

“Snow… I’m not Sou-Chan in this form remember? But yeah! We’re going to collect the most, otherwise we’ll lose our heads. Probably literally.”

“That’s a scary thought”

“Is it?”

“Of course it is. Dying is a scary thing. I don’t want to die. I want to see my mom and dad… I want to see my friends every day and hang out with them… I want to see more Magical Girl Anime… I’m afraid of dying.”

La Pucelle looked at Snow White.

“I’m scared too, Snow. But just because it’s scary, doesn’t mean we should let it get to us, right?”

La Pucelle was right.

Snow White thought to herself, the other Magical Girls wouldn’t be crying around in a corner somewhere. She wondered if they were already more determined to survive or not.

She can’t just sit around here, either.

Nemurin is dead, but Snow White was sure she would also do anything to survive.

She began to cry.

“Hey, cheer up, Snow”

La Pucelle removed his sword from the sheath. He lay down on one knee, and presented the sword to Snow White.

It was a sparkling sword, about 50cm in length.

“W-What are you doing?” asked Snow White as she glanced at her friend.

“I’m a Knight, right? Consider this my knightly vow. No matter what happens, my sword will be at your side. We’re allies, and we’ll see this through, Snow White.”

For some reason, even though the delivery was super cliché, Snow White felt at ease. Maybe it’s the fact that her old friend is with her, or maybe it’s just that she actually has someone to talk to about all this.

Snow White continued to cry, not out of fear, but out of happiness that she had someone who would be with her. Especially during something as horrible as this.

Snow White hugged La Pucelle.

“Thank you… Thank you so much for being a good friend…”

La Pucelle was startled. He blushed a bit, but slowly hugged her back.

Do you ever have someone that you can talk about anything with, no matter what?

For Top Speed, Ripple is that person. Although she has no idea if Ripple might feel the same way.

Top Speed had always thought of Ripple as her self-proclaimed partner. She never treated Ripple as lower than her, even if she is her student. To Top Speed, Ripple was her equal in every way.

Sometimes when Top Speed does talk about something, Ripple would reply with a scoff, a 'Tch!', or silent nodding. She's like that. It doesn't bother Top Speed at all, because people have their own way of dealing with things.

Ripple's not like other people, and that's perfectly fine.

Ripple has her moments, too.

When Nemurin died, Top Speed took the news harder than most. Nemurin was a close friend of Top Speed, one of the few veteran Magical Girls of N-City.

For what felt like the first time ever, Top Speed actually cried when she heard the news.

She was with Ripple at the time, and she cried even though she didn't want to. The sadness just overwhelmed her.

Ripple was concerned for her. Although Ripple probably didn't know Nemurin too well, and though she may act defiant to Top Speed, Ripple does care for Top Speed in her own way.

Ripple cheered her up, kept her focused. Ripple said that she'll think about their next plan calmly, and she laid out a good strategy for them.

It was her own way of making Top Speed feel better. She wasn't the type to hug it out or anything like that. Top Speed appreciated it.

Still, the look on Ripple's face was unmistakable. She too was scared. She hid it very well though.

Top Speed understood. The thought of dying scared her, and dying via heart attack, that just made her chest hurt thinking about it. But she can't just stand there and do nothing.

A plan was formed, to team up with Ripple. Ripple also needed this a lot more than Top Speed would.

Ripple's Magical Skill, *'The ability to never miss a target with her shuriken*', is quite… specific.

It's not useful for helping people except in an extremely specific situation. The shurikens could also be deadly, so that narrows it down even further to extreme situations.

With no way to use it under normal circumstances, Ripple had to resort to using her regular Magical Girl skills of speed and strength, and that put her at a disadvantage. With Top Speed's help though, Ripple could be back on track.

Top Speed's Magical Skill isn't so much a skill as it is a tool. Her broomstick, *Rapid Swallow*, was an extremely fast broomstick that can travel at breakneck speeds.

Not to mention it looks like a hybrid between a broomstick *and* a motorcycle.

With her power, Top Speed is able to quickly scan the city in the blink of an eye, to find anyone that might need help.

The two teamed up, with Top Speed Piloting *Rapid Swallow*, and Ripple in the backseat.

They flew throughout many districts, keeping track of anyone in trouble, collecting Magical Candies.

During their travels, occasionally they would make quick stops for eating and talking.

On one of these stops, Top Speed had a heart to heart with Ripple about the whole ordeal.

"Y'know Ripple, dying's not on my list anytime soon. So if they want to kill me, then tough luck"

She said it with a strangely serious and intense look on her face.

"I don't think any of us wants to die, Top Speed. That's just human nature, right? Being afraid to die?"

"True enough I guess… Still, it's not the dying part that gets me. I'm fine with dying, just not now"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I'd like to live for at least half a year more. Six months, that's all I'm asking for."

"That's… specific. Why?"

Top Speed answered with a sly looking smile. She never approached the subject any longer, and they continued on their way.

“Hey Ripple, mind if we make a flyby to the National Highway?”

“Sure, why not?”

“That place is like a time bomb. There’s gotta be *someone* that needs help, right? Let’s get us the most Magical Candy we can!”

“If it’s Magical Candy amount that you’re worried about, we’d have a better chance in the red-light district”

“Aha, you’re right! One problem though. That’s Calamity Mary’s turf”

“I know”

“Ooooh nonono, Ripple! Nope! Nuh-uh! I am *not* gonna willingly take you there. So, sorry, missy!”

“Why not? She’d hardly be the type to help people, might as well do her job”

“Ripple… you do realize that the reason we’re workin’ our necks off for this thing is to stay *alive*, right? If you’re *that* eager to die, it’s a lot easier to just stop collecting Magical Candies than to go to Calamity Mary’s place”

“So you’re worried that she’ll kill you”

“No, you dummy! I’m worried about her killing *you*! So we’re not going there. End of convo”

Although Top Speed understood Ripple’s intentions. She couldn’t bring herself to put Ripple in danger.

Ripple was right though. Both Top Speed’s and Ripple’s districts are quite peaceful. They’re akin to a sleepy town.

This is of course a good thing, since the less crime there is, the better it is for everyone. But in this case, Ripple and Top Speed would need some trouble in order to actually *help* people.

Intruding on other Magical Girls’ territories could be seen as poor taste, so they’ve mostly gone through their own districts and ones that weren’t guarded by any Magical Girls.

Either way, it'll take a lot of convincing before Top Speed would agree to take Ripple to the red-light district.

At this point, Ripple's opinion of Top Speed had increased again. It went from *Mentor, but still an idiot* to *Annoying, but useful*.

They finished their daily rounds for the day, and Top Speed's broomstick slowly descended towards their usual meeting spot. The 7-story building where Ripple first transformed into a Magical Girl.

But Ripple saw something off. On top of the building were two other Magical Girls.

It should be noted that Ripple was never good with people.

When it comes to collecting Magical Candies, having a team is better than just trying to do it alone. Ripple understood this.

The only person she ever talked to was Top Speed. She mostly avoided contact with other Magical Girls. Simply put, there was no reason for Ripple to speak with them or to reach out. Needless to say, her contacts were… limited.

Not the case with Top Speed. She knows most of the Magical Girls in the city, and during the Weekend Chat, Ripple could see that she actively chatted with several different Magical Girls.

Considering Top Speed didn't find the two on the roof to be an odd thing, that can only mean one thing.

Top Speed probably invited these two over to the roof beforehand.

Ripple recognized the two, if only because she saw them recently in the Weekend Chat.
Sister Nana and Weiss Winterprison.

Sister Nana was dressed like a nun. In fact, if you'd meet her on a random street, you'd think she actually was a nun. The outfit certainly looked religious, but lacked any religious markings. It looked like a nun, yet something was off.

Definitely a Magical Girl, but you'd be forgiven if you missed it.

Weiss Winterprison on the other hand looked nothing like a traditional Magical Girl. She had short brown hair, and dressed in a huge coat, almost as if it were a straitjacket, except you can actually move your hands freely.

She had a huge scarf that often covered the bottom half of her face. Her color choice was black and brown. Definitely not a traditional Magical Girl style choice of clothing.

“Greetings, Miss Ripple. My name is Sister Nana! It’s a pleasure to meet you! This is my companion, Weiss Winterprison”

“Hello”

Ripple was trying to determine what these two were like.

Sister Nana talks very formally, has a very soft smile. Ripple considered her the sweet and loving type.

Weiss Winterprison only spoke one word, and seemed very distant. Ripple considered her the strong and silent type.

Neither of them made a good impression on Ripple.

She didn't mind, however. She of all people knew that first impressions are rarely true. Still, if these two keep it up, they're going to have a hard time to socialize with Ripple.

Sister Nana spoke up.

"I think this is wrong!"

Ripple raised one eyebrow.

"What is?"

Sister Nana approached Ripple and grabbed her hand. Ripple didn't really like it, but she allowed it.

"This entire situation is wrong. This ordeal we must go through. We were given powers to help people, yet now we are using it to compete against each other. What's worse, the consequences are death! We are killing each other! I think this is wrong."

Ripple agreed. She didn't like this situation either.

Sister Nana used her other hand to clasp Ripple's hand. She closed her eyes and smiled.

"That's why I believe that it is best to join forces."

Before Ripple could answer, Top Speed spoke for her.

"That's nice and all, but before we agree on anything, I need to know the details. What's the play, here? What's the end-game?"

Sister Nana glanced at Top Speed, still holding onto Ripple's hand.

“I suggest we form a plan together. Surely, in this case, working together is better than working apart?”

Ripple scoffed. Winterprison cleared her throat. Ripple had a feeling it was to chide her for scoffing.

Ripple felt like she was back in elementary school. It’s been such a long time since she met someone that was legitimately selfless.

Sister Nana looked like she would do anything to help others, putting their fates even before her own.

She reminded Ripple of her own mother.

“So do you agree, Top Speed? This is a situation that only Magical Girls can handle. We have tried communicating with Fav to no avail.”

“Hmm, yeah, I tried talking to Fav too. He’s being really dodgy lately.”

“Then we must ally with each other. Find other willing Magical Girls, and find out how to escape this ordeal. Else more victims will show up by the end of the week. I am certain Miss Nemurin, if she were with us, would agree.”

“Yeah… the poor girl. She didn’t deserve to go out like that.”

Sister Nana began to have tears rolling out of her eyes.

Ripple stayed silent. She was never one for publicly showing emotion. She shook off Sister Nana’s hands.

Winterprison replied with a glare at Ripple.

Ripple, not one to back down from a challenge, answered with a glare herself, thirsting for blood.

Winterprison walked in front of Sister Nana. Those intense eyes, the glare, the posture. Ripple can tell that this girl would die to protect Sister Nana.

Ripple’s hands slowly moved to her back, ready to unsheathe her sword if anything happened.

Clap!

“WELP! That was a nice chat! Glad we understood each other. Listen, we agree. It’s best to team up with the most Magical Girls. There’s just one important thing I gotta deal with first!”

Top Speed had clapped her hands loudly, startling everyone.

“Whatever do you mean?”

“Wait here, kay?”

Top Speed dragged Ripple by her scarf to her broomstick, and flew away.

Just as quickly, she flew back, Ripple following along, folding her arms with a grumpy look on her face.

“Sorry about that!”

“Go die in a hole”

Truly, Top Speed and Ripple’s relationship can be summed up with those two sentences.

“Ripple here is a very blunt girl. Sometimes if people get too close, she’ll assume the worst. It’s just her way of protecting us, so don’t mind her. She’s just a bit… aggressive”

“…And you’re a bit annoying”

“See? No ill will at all! She might not be good at talking, but she’s a hell of a fighter with her sword! She’ll come around to you, promise!”

Sister Nana nodded.

“So you agree to our alliance?”

“I do. I can’t afford to die, not *now*. Might as well team up, right?”

There it is again. *I can’t afford to die*. Ripple remembered what Top Speed said. She wanted to live for at least 6 more months.

The look on Top Speed's face when she said these words. Her motivation to survive isn't the fear of death.

Then what is it?

Why is she so determined to hold out for 6 more months?

Ripple pointed at Top Speed.

"Hold it."

"Huh?"

"You have a habit of voicing out your opinions. I get that. But, I'm not convinced yet."

"What? What is it *now*?"

"I still don't trust them. For all I know they could stab us in the back later down the line."

Top Speed sighed.

"Ripple, come *on*! Trust me, they're perfectly fine"

"Give me a good reason"

"Calamity Mary"

Ripple raised her eyebrow and glanced over at Top Speed, with a shocked expression on her face.

"What about her?"

"Did you forget? Sister Nana was nearly shot to death for entering Calamity Mary's turf just a couple of weeks ago. She was headed there to negotiate with her. Sister Nana is about as trustworthy as it gets."

"…Okay. What about Winterprison?"

"How do you think Sister Nana got out of Calamity Mary's little shootout alive? Winterprison fought her back and got her out safely."

As Top Speed mentioned it, Winterprison's cheeks lightly blushed.

Ripple noticed. So she was telling the truth, and these two do genuinely seem like good people.

She took a deep breath.

"You're right. Sorry. Didn't mean to be brash, it's just… Times like these, I don't know if I can just trust people that show up in front of my face"

Sister Nana nodded. Top Speed put her hands on her hips.

"Well, we can't just throw away the other Magical Girls either, right?"

"But sometimes they might want to attack us. A little precaution is necessary"

"They won't get a chance to hurt us, Ripple. Not if I don't let them. Don't forget, I'm the fastest Magical Girl in the city, or my name isn't Top Speed!"

Ripple facepalmed in embarrassment.

"Right! I think our business here is done! Alliance accepted!" said Top Speed as she strutted her way to her broomstick.

Ripple merely nodded and closed her eyes.

The Western District. Oftentimes nicknamed the Temple District due to its abundance of old temples lying around.

Most of them are long abandoned, or in a state of ruin. With the modernization of the city, there really was no need for the temples to be around. However, they were never demolished.

A good chunk of them litter the middle of the district, surrounding an even larger one at the center of it all. Not many people venture this far.

The city hasn't designated this site as a tourist attraction, and so no tourists ever come close. If they do, they'll be at the outskirts of the temples. The big central temple is untouched.

The perfect hideout for a Magical Girl.

Not just one either. Within these temples, lives 5 Magical Girls.

The Magical Girl known as *Ruler* leads the group.

She was dressed in royal attire and a cape, complete with a tiara. She was sitting down on an old chair within the temple, cushioned with a pillow, turning on her Magical Phone.

“This new version update. Curious little thing, isn’t it?”

Besides her chair was a table with a broken Buddha statue. The statue was completely fine save for missing the head.

Ruler rested her shoulder on the neck stump of the statue and lazily browsed her Magical Phone.

Besides her chair, sitting on her knees, was another Magical Girl wearing a white swimsuit.

She had headphones as well, with bunny motifs on either side. Behind her swimsuit were what appeared to be small black bat wings. On her waist were 4 more of her headphone-like objects, but with wires of some such protruding from it.

“Seems it allows us to share our Magical Candies. Interesting,” continued Ruler.

Also within the room was a hole. It was small, but it was the diameter of 1 meter. Sitting on the hole was a Magical Girl with a dog outfit. She had a hoodie with dog ears on it, and her hands were covered with gigantic mittens shaped like paws.
Her necklace was in the shape of a bone. She wore shorts and a cape as well. She also had stockings that were white with black spots on them. However, her overall color scheme was brown.

She also had a tail of a dog that seemed to grow out from the back of her waist.

“The potential applications for this new feature is… useful”

On a beam at the ceiling of the temple, there was a black crow wearing a pearl necklace. However, if you blink, it’ll turn into a cat wearing boots, then if you blink again it’s suddenly a swan with a ring around its beak.

Finally, they transformed into two small Magical Girls. They look like angels. Literally.

They had what seemed to be halos, with one wing each, and matching bloomers and dresses.

They look to be about 10 years old, and are small in stature as well. They were sitting next to each other.

Identical in almost every way. The only way you could differentiate them is through their ankles. One wears a ribbon on her right ankle, the other one on her left.

“Should we get enough candy, this means we can divide it for those of us who don’t have it, correct?”

Ruler glared at the dog Magical Girl in the hole. *Tama* was her name.

The glare scared Tama, who yelped and was unable to answer.

“Slow. Zero points,” said Ruler condescendingly.

Ruler pointed at the two angels. *Minael*, the one with the ribbon on her left ankle, and *Yunael*, the one with the ribbon on her right ankle. Also known as the *Peaky Angels*.

“What do you think, sis?” asked Minael

“Share it all! We can get more for less work!” said Yunael.

“Quick response. I like it. Thirty points to each,” said Ruler.

She moved on to the final Magical Girl. The one with the swimsuit. Her name is *Swim Swim*.

“Swim Swim. What are your thoughts on this?”

Swim Swim simply shrugged in silence. It seemed to be her way of saying *‘I have nothing more to add*’.

Ruler scowled. Swim Swim’s aloof demeanor, combined with her looks being more on the attractive side. Slender body, her breasts, her face.

A ridiculously attractive appearance, yet the mind of an idiot simpleton.

Ruler was always annoyed at this. She considered people who are high on the attractiveness scale to be low on the intelligence scale. She prefers mental intelligence more than anything, and people who act stupid *and* who have a pretty face are low on her list.

“Seriously, could you at least *act* like you’re not an idiot?”

Ruler sat back in her chair.

“I’d appreciate some initiative from all of you.”

The Peaky Angels rolled their eyes. Tama drooped her dog ears apologetically. Swim Swim continued to stare at Ruler, remaining emotionless.

Of course, Swim Swim was not the only one Ruler considered to be foolish. While Nemurin has died, and Ruler does feel a pang of sadness when she heard of it, she knows that Nemurin’s abilities couldn’t have been used to get Magical Candies.

Nemurin should have known that and acted, but she didn’t.

“Anyways, on to the important matters at hand. Now that we know what’s at stake, we should focus on collecting Magical Candies for all of us. *By any means necessary*.”

The Peaky Angels perked up.

“What are you implying?” “You don’t mean… forcefully? Stealing?”

“The only requirements to share Magical Candy is to have two Magical Phones interact with each other. I’ve confirmed this beforehand, so I know that it works in practice.”

“O-hoo!” “That’s so awesome!”

“Do you guys have nothing constructive to add besides comments? Keep that up and you’ll end up looking like idiots otherwise”

The Peaky Angels rolled their eyes once more, then started giggling by themselves.

Ruler folded her arms.

“Need I remind you two that you’re under my protection? That means you also work for me by default. You’d do well to heed my orders, unless you want to follow in Nemurin’s footsteps”

“Ooh, she wants us to work?” “What on earth could she mean?”

The twins were clearly having their fun with Ruler. Ruler simply scoffed in return.

“Like I said, only capable of making snide comments, with *no* actual input to anything. I can’t believe you two…”

Ruler really wanted to slap them in the face, or give them a good spanking. However, she knows that the next plan is more important than trying to discipline children.

“It’s really simple, what our next plan should be. Who do you think has the most candy right now? The one who’s most active in doing her Magical Girl duties?”

“You talking about Snow White?” “Ah, you mean her!”

“That’s right. Snow White has the most candies. However, *we* so desperately need those candies! I’m sure you *all* know where this is leading up to?”

Sanae Mukou has become a Magical Girl. Finally, she had achieved the one thing she dreamed of.

Ever since elementary school, she had excelled in almost everything that’s been thrown at her, all the way till High School.

Then she went to college, and went top of the class there too. She continued when she was employed at a job.

For most of her life, she strived to be the best no matter what.

However, in her struggle to always improve upon herself, she had become a recluse. She never socialized much, and was always alone. She believed she had no time for those kinds of things.

She needed a distraction. So she played the social game, *Magical Girl Raising Project*. Then, she was chosen to become a Magical Girl.

Throughout her life, she always had one thought about herself.

“Why do I accomplish so much but feel like I’ve accomplished nothing? Am I just a fool?”

Oftentimes, she felt like the Ugly Duckling. Just like the character, she finally believed this was her moment, where the Ugly Duckling was revealed to be a beautiful Swan.

That day, Sanae quit her job.

Her appearance as a Magical Girl can be best described as *proud*.

She had a formal dress, with a huge cape. Her hair was tucked in with fancy hairpins, and she wore long gloves on her hands and long stockings on her legs.

She had a tiara on her head with a small jewel adorned in the center.

Her color scheme was white, just like the swan she wants to be.

A simple design, but one that was clear to anyone that looked at her.

Her hair, like nobility, was colored purple. She had a scepter made of ivory and gold, with a jewel encrusted on top of it.

Her shoes were made of glass, all the more so that people will hear every step she makes.

She had become the beautiful swan. She had become Ruler.

However, that would not last. Not a few hours later after she first transformed, she was introduced to her mentor…

…Calamity Mary.

The face of a psychopath. She drank booze, and smoked a cigarette while casually holding her gun.

At times, she would shoot it. Sanae could remember the sound. Thunderous, large, like a bomb.

When Sanae looked at the direction of her shot, she could see a hole about 3 meters in diameter. Sometimes it was a crater, and sometimes the building would crumble.

“Now listen here, little girl. There’s one thing you should know. Don’t try and cross me, *okay*?”

Sanae tried to stand. Her face was on the ground this whole time. Forcefully made to kneel. She was bruised. She was hurt. Badly.

Calamity Mary's gunshots came from a pistol, but the resulting sound and damage was not normal for a pistol at all.

Sanae looked at her mentor.

"Is this… Is this your Magical Skill?"

"Hm? Did you ask a question, little girl? Because I could've sworn I heard a question. Why don't you figure out the answer for yourself, like a good girl, okay?"

Sanae silently looked down.

Calamity Mary went up to her and aimed her pistol at Sanae.

"Hey. Did you hear me? You gonna shut up and stop asking me questions?"

Sanae nodded

"I need to hear an okay, *okay*?"

"Okay… Okay… I'll stop."

Calamity Mary twirled her pistol, then blew off the smoke that came out of it. She then holstered it and glanced over at Sanae, giving her a wicked smile.

Sanae could feel her cheeks burning red with blood. This humiliation is simply too much for her to take. To be reduced to this…

Sanae had to discover her own power. She needed to gain the upper hand on Calamity Mary. Though, she had a feeling that whatever she planned, Calamity Mary would beat her on speed alone.

The lightning-like reflexes of this woman was nothing to underestimate. Sanae could end up like that building she just shot.

Although as a Magical Girl, Sanae was much more durable than any concrete building, she had a feeling that a shot from Calamity Mary would completely obliterate her.

Instant Death.

Just when Sanae thought she had become a swan, she found herself plunged into the water. Her spirit was broken.

That's when she had learned to hold her humiliation at bay. She had bided her time. She had held a grudge against Calamity Mary.

After her period of apprenticeship had ended, and the painful months of torture and abuse had stopped, she formed her own faction of Magical Girls and retreated away.

She made sure to select only people she knows she could easily command.

The nervous wreck that is Tama.

The Peaky Angels, who'd much rather follow a leader than do anything themselves.

As well as the withdrawn Swim Swim, who never seemed to show any visible emotion other than obedience.

Tama doesn't just look like a dog. She acts like one as well. She is loyal to whoever her leader is. Oftentimes very naïve as well.

Like a dog, although sometimes Sanae would scold her, as long as her master was happy, she was happy as well.

The Peaky Angels were cowards. They wouldn't dare fight against Sanae. All she needed was to raise her voice, and they'd be compliant.

Though, she had to admit, she still couldn't figure out which one Yunael was and which one Minael was.

Swim Swim was just quiet and withdrawn. Though Sanae suspects it's because she's not that smart to begin with.

One time, Swim Swim was staring at the signs of the Western District, which was pronounced *Nishimonzen* in Japanese.

When Sanae asked what she was looking at, Swim Swim's response was to write the whole thing in latin alphabet.

She wrote down, in all capitals, 'NISHIMONZEN', and told Sanae that it was so that she wouldn't forget the name.

It seemed like Swim Swim has trouble reading Kanji, and was only capable of reading Hiragana and Katakana.

All were fools by themselves. However, with Sanae's guidance, they could potentially be united to become a force to be feared.

"I'm in!" "Same, super cool plan!"

The Peaky Angels were grinning at the prospect of gaining the candies. They immediately agreed to the Magical Candy theft plan.

Swim Swim nodded silently.

Tama on the other hand was a bit more reluctant. She nervously asked if it was okay to take the candies of other Magical Girls.

Swim Swim replied immediately.

"You shouldn't question a leader's decision."

Tama nervously nodded in agreement after this statement.

For a while now, Ruler had been keeping track of Snow White's activities. She's almost certain of her next move.

In order to make sure, she sent Tama and the Peaky Angels out to scout for their target.

Only Swim Swim and Ruler was left at the temple.

For the longest time, Swim Swim didn't move from her pose. Ruler couldn't help questioning her.

“Hey, Swim Swim. Why are you sitting up straight?”

“One must always have a proper posture when in the presence of one’s leader!”

“Hey… that’s what I used to say”

“Yes. It’s… what you used to say”

What do you know. Swim Swim remembers. Ruler used to constantly say these things to the others, especially when they slack around.

All this time, Ruler had been grading them on their antics and how they act around her with points. But she didn’t notice that Swim Swim actually paid attention to all those.

Though it’s a small statement, the fact that Swim Swim took it to heart convinced Ruler of one thing.

Swim Swim’s loyalty to her.

Ruler remembered the rules she told everyone. She wondered if anyone remembered them. She wondered if Swim Swim had actually remembered all of them

[Although a Magical Girl must not reveal their identity to normal people, they should also refrain from revealing their identity to fellow Magical Girls]

[Our group will become stronger if everyone strives to become like the Leader]

[We must always be on the lookout for strong enemies, and they must always be eliminated as soon as possible]

[Do not underestimate your foes, even if they may not possess any Magical Skills or powers]

If Swim Swim truly remembered all of this, then Ruler had the wrong image of her this whole time.

Ruler sighed, got off her throne, and walked over to Swim Swim. She bent down to Swim Swim, and she smiled.

She began to stroke Swim Swim’s hair.

“Swim Swim, you just told me the most important words that I’ve ever heard”

“Important words? What important words?”

Ruler giggled.

“My words, of course. You reminded me of myself. I was wrong, Swim Swim. You’re not an idiot. You’re not a fool. I misjudged you.”

Ruler’s plan was simple. It was simple enough that not even the most idiotic person in the world should be able to mess it up.

First, she determined Snow White’s meeting place, and confirmed it with her scouts.

As suspected, she knew Snow White and La Pucelle regularly meet at a steel tower within Kagehama district.

Finding this out was simple. Browsing through the chat logs, Ruler could still find traces of Snow White and La Pucelle discussing potential meeting locations. Cross-reference with their districts, and there were only a few key locations that Ruler had to scout out.

Finding it out this easily made Ruler think less of them.

They shouldn’t have made it so easy to find their secret hideout.

Second, she had to separate the two. Out of the two Magical Girls, La Pucelle seemed the most dangerous.

Ruler realized she had one disadvantage. She had no idea what their Magical Skills are, nor did she know how capable those two were in a fight.

The one trump card Ruler did have is that she knew the capabilities of her team.

Tama’s power, to create holes on any surface, can be used to ambush and trap La Pucelle. She made sure to place her underground in the ambush site.

If all works out, La Pucelle should be trapped underground, with no way to get back.

Ruler didn't recall ever seeing La Pucelle fly, though it doesn't hurt to be prepared.

The Peaky Angels' shapeshifting abilities would become very useful here. They can easily disguise themselves and surprise La Pucelle.

Finally, Ruler and Swim Swim would take care of Snow White.

Swim Swim would be an ideal fighter. Her power is to turn into liquid, effectively nullifying any physical attacks, since it'll just pass through her.

Ruler's power may not be useful offensively, but her Magical Skill is deadly in its own right.

The ability to give any order to a person, and to have that person obey the order no matter what. A form of mind control.

Ruler didn't know exactly the details and the extent of her power, or how specific or general the orders she could give should be, but she knew that once she states a command, whoever she ordered it would be obliged to fulfill it.

Besides, the order would simply be to give Ruler all of her Magical Candies. It shouldn't be too complicated.

A simple plan, one that the team shouldn't botch.

This would also be a test of the team. If they execute this perfectly, then Ruler can move on to her main goal.

Calamity Mary.

She still held a grudge against her. One that Ruler believes will get settled.

Indeed, if her team is good, then she believes she can formulate a plan to get back at Calamity Mary once and for all.

However, now is not the time. Now, she must focus on the task at hand.

Everyone is in position. Ruler and Swim Swim waiting at the base of the steel tower, with the Peaky Angels and Tama between the borders of La Pucelle and Snow White's territory.

Suddenly, a beep from Ruler's Magical Phone. The Peaky Angels.

“She’s here! I see her!” “La Pucelle’s here! Running fast!”

“You know what to do. Once I give the signal, you retreat. Make sure she doesn’t escape!”

Ruler hung up the phone. She glanced at Swim Swim. She nodded at her, giving her the signal.

Ruler and Swim Swim began to run up the side of the steel tower.

There’s no turning back now.

La Pucelle stopped in his tracks. He was running as fast as possible to the regular meeting place with Snow White.

That’s when he recognized the people above him.

The twins. The Peaky Angels, they called themselves. He remembered them from the Magical Chat.

But this is the first time he ever actually saw them in the flesh.

One of them flew up behind him, still keeping their distance.

“What are you two doing here?” asked La Pucelle.

The two angelic Magical Girls grinned. Then, without warning, they both charged forward.

One from the front, one from the back. Intentions clear. Had to move fast.

La Pucelle quickly rolled out to the side, faster than the eye could see. In one swift motion, he removed his sword from his sheath.

The length is now about 70 cm long, tip pointed at the direction of the angels.

The two angels zipped past each other. Had La Pucelle stayed for a second longer, he would’ve been hurt badly by the force of their charges, caught in the middle of two directions.

Still on one knee, crouching, but with sword pointed, La Pucelle asked again, more threateningly, this time.

“I’ll ask you guys again. What are you doing here?”

“Huh? She’s asking us what we’re doing, sis!” “Oh, well isn’t that obvious?”

The two Magical Girls grinned widely.

“We’d like to have your Magical Candies, please!”

La Pucelle felt his blood rising. He had a mixture of emotions. On one hand, he was happy that he’s able to fight. Something he wanted to do ever since he knew what his Magical Skill was.

On the other hand, he was furious at these twins who resorted to robbery over hard work.

He had to be careful. These two were watching him. Any sudden movements and they would swoop down and take advantage.

In his stance right now, on one knee and crouching, he was at a disadvantage. Even with a sword, it was an awkward position to be in. Slowly, he tried to adjust his position to a better stance.

However, he suddenly became unbalanced as the ground shook beneath him.

It all happened in an instant. Centered directly between the feet of La Pucelle was a hole that began to form. It was expanding fast. It’s as if the ground immediately opened its mouth to swallow him.

He only had a few seconds to react, while there was still enough ground to stand on. Only two choices to make.

He could jump away. He had enough strength to escape the forming hole, but if he did, he wouldn’t be able to properly control his body enough to dodge. The twins would surely take that split second chance of his body being in the air mid-jump to launch a devastating attack.

He could let himself be swallowed by the hole. He had no idea what lay below him though. Another Magical Girl? More than one? Maybe it was bottomless. He couldn’t fly, so this would also be bad.

Two options, both deadly.

He decided to take a third.

In one swift motion, he dropped his sword below him and began to stand on it. Instantly, the sword's length, width, and thickness grew.

Five times its normal size, the sword had become larger, supporting La Pucelle. It grew at a speed that matched the forming hole, and before long, it formed a bridge at the hole.

He didn't fall down, nor did he jump away. He was still in control.

This was his Magical Skill. The ability to change and alter the properties of his sword. From size, to width, to thickness.

He could hear scratching and noises from down the hole, but it was far too dark for him to see.

The twins scowled in disbelief. However, they didn't hesitate to take advantage of this chance. They dived straight to La Pucelle, believing him to be weaponless.

Not quite. La Pucelle unbuckled the sheath of his sword, and it instantly grew larger. About 70 cm in length.

A side effect of his ability is the fact that he can also grow his sheath to accommodate his sword.

By now the twin angels' descent was far too fast to stop. They couldn't even do it if they tried.

Like a batter waiting for the baseball, La Pucelle, with one mighty swing, managed to swat the twins far away from him. It wasn't a lethal blow, and their Magical Girl bodies could handle the impact.

He could see as they twirled uncontrollably and crash landed somewhere in the distance. Now's his chance.

He hopped away from the hole, off his sword-bridge. Re-buckled his sheath. He grabbed the hilt of his sword, and shrunk it back to 50 cm, ready for combat.

That's when he saw the head of a girl pop out from the hole. Another Magical Girl? This one had a hoodie with dog ears.

"Hey! Stop moving! I'm warning you!"

Dog ears, dog ears… He vaguely remembered one girl. Tama? That was her name.

Tama looked out of the hole nervously. It looked like she was gearing up for an attack or something, climbing out of the hole. La Pucelle wouldn't take any chances, he ordered her to stop moving.

However, he saw that Tama immediately tried to climb out of the hole.

La Pucelle silently thanked the fact that Tama was a Magical Girl. Since it means she'll survive this.

Immediately, La Pucelle delivered a kick to Tama as she tried to climb out of the hole, Tama fell back in the hole, and La Pucelle could hear her screaming as she fell down. No matter what happens, La Pucelle isn't taking any chances.

He looked at where the twins were. They weren't lying on the ground. He couldn't find them. Did they flee? No matter, all that's left is to question Tama.

He looked down below the hole, where he saw Tama rubbing her head in pain after the long fall.

"Hey! You down there! Tell me what's going on, right now!"

Suddenly, La Pucelle was tackled. The force was great. It was one of the twins. He was flung far away from the hole. Quickly, he regained his balance, ready to counterattack.

But there was no one there. He could've sworn it was one of the angels, and judging from the angle, they should've been in his line of sight. But all he saw was a black crow flying around.

Then he was attacked again from the back. Out of breath, he tumbled forward again. Caught by surprise once more.

Again, he stood up, a bit wounded from the blunt force of the two attacks. He scanned his surroundings, but all he saw was…

…A rubber ball?

Slowly, he began to understand the situation. The crow quickly flew in front of him and picked up the ball. It started flying towards the steel tower.

Before his eyes, La Pucelle saw the crow and the ball begin to bend, squish, discolor, and transform…

…into the twin angels.

“Shapeshifting? That’s their power?”

Though they’re quite far, La Pucelle’s hearing as a Magical Girl was quite great. He focused on them.

“Sis, you alright? I think she’s hurt enough” “I’m good sis… We stalled long enough”

La Pucelle was confused.

Stalled? Wait…

He remembered the steel tower. His mind raced towards Snow White. The whole fight had been a trap. It didn’t matter if he won or lost.

Of course, the one with the most Magical Candies wasn’t him. It would’ve been Snow White.

Now he was tired and wounded, but he immediately ran as fast as he could towards the steel tower.

“*Shit!* I was so *stupid!*”

Ruler and Swim Swim had been waiting patiently at the steel tower. There, they saw Snow White, sitting down, still not knowing they’re there.

Slowly, Ruler and Swim Swim approached her.

Snow White glanced at the two.

“Huh? Who are you two?”

Ruler directed her scepter at Snow White. Calmly, she said with a commanding voice.

“Snow White. Don’t move!”

“Wha- Ngh-“

Snow White twitched, eyes wide. Then froze completely still.

Ruler’s Magical Skill was working, but she had to keep close to Snow White, and had to use her scepter.

Although Ruler knows about the limitations of her power, the fact that it requires her to direct it through her scepter and the distance requirement, she never told anyone about it.

It’s best if people don’t realize she has limitations.

Swim Swim quickly pulled out her Magical Phone, and took out Snow White’s Magical Phone.

Then, she transferred the Magical Candy. Slowly but surely, it had begun to fill up.

It’s true that Ruler could’ve used any command to Snow White and she would obey it. However, instead of ‘*Give me all your Magical Candies*’, she figured ‘*Don’t move*’ would be a safer option.

She still had no idea if Snow White could fight, but if she started making a fuss, and on the off-chance that Snow White actually had a power that could beat them, then the whole plan was worthless.

Telling her not to move was the wiser option.

“Swim Swim, how much longer?”

“Just a bit more”

“Okay, make it quick”

“She has quite a lot on her. Please wait a bit longer”

Ruler noticed someone in the distance. The Peaky Angels, one carrying the other, up to the steel tower.

Further ahead, she could just barely make out the figure of a girl with a knight costume.

Did they seriously lead her here?

Ruler could see La Pucelle catch up to the twins in the distance. It looks like they're fighting still.

"Swim Swim!"

"I know! I know!"

Snow White had been attacked.

Snow White is in danger.

Koyuki is in danger.

La Pucelle's chest hurt just thinking about it. His head began to hurt from the pain, as well as the possibility of what's happening above that steel tower.

La Pucelle… Souta Kishibe had become a Magical Girl. He had become a hero. He had always been a fan of those shows.

He was never discouraged by any foe. He will not give up in his fight to protect those that are important to him.

However, even though these twin angels are trying to reach the steel tower, they've completely lost their will to fight.

Fighting them here would be pointless. These two can fly, the advantage is theirs. Even if La Pucelle would win, he would accomplish nothing, since he'd just be buying time for the other party.

For the first time, La Pucelle experienced a surge of power.

He felt elated at this incredible feeling, this rush of adrenaline.

After all, he was a born warrior. He immersed himself in it.

There were very few options to save Snow White. The twins are clearly faster than him and can reach the tower.

Whoever was attacking her was probably also up there. He thought for a second, and decided on his course of action.

He hoped that this was the right thing.

With all of his strength, he sprinted towards the tower. He let his momentum carry him. The strength of his Magical Girl form, inertia, all directed at the tower.

With the speed of a bullet and the strength of a freighter truck, he unleashed a shoulder charge on the legs of the steel tower.

The steel tower was physically shaking. Even from the top, you could feel it like a raging earthquake.

Wires were pulling away and being torn. Some were flung off the tower entirely. It wasn't easy to keep your balance.

Ruler's scepter, which she was holding out, had flown off her hand, thrown away by the incredible shaking of the tower. Meanwhile, Snow White had still been keeping her position, holding still.

But the shaking only continued as the structure began to weaken. As the tower began to lean, Ruler, Swim Swim, and Snow White began to fall off the tower.

The twin angels saw Ruler and Swim Swim falling, and quickly rushed in to catch Ruler as she was falling down.

Meanwhile, La Pucelle also ran to catch Snow White mid-fall, as she noticed she wasn't flying at all.

Swim Swim should've crashed into the ground, however, she quickly transformed into liquid form, splashed down the ground, and reformed, completely free of damage.

The twin angels put Ruler down the ground, and Ruler glared at La Pucelle, who was still carrying Snow White.

Ruler outnumbered La Pucelle 4 against 1. Snow White's not useful in her condition, and La Pucelle could easily be taken care of.

But wait…

"Where's Tama?" asked Ruler to the twins

"Er… Um, she kind of got drop kicked by La Pucelle down the hole when she wanted to climb out" "We're not sure if she's still back there or not"

She should've expected this. Tama wasn't a fighter. The Peaky Angels were cowards. She should've expected that even if it's 3 to 1, La Pucelle would've come out on top.

Ruler glanced at Swim Swim, who was holding on to her Magical Phone. Swim Swim nodded.

She saw her scepter rolling on the ground and grabbed it quickly. Then, she saw the tower.

It was swaying left and right. It looked like it was going to crash.

"Retreat!"

"Huh!?" "Are you serious?"

"Yes, I am. It's a tactical retreat. We need to regroup. Retreat"

With a bewildered look, the twin angels followed Ruler, as they ran and escaped as fast as possible.

Back home at the temple, everyone was tired. Ruler had been anticipating this moment for a while now.

Tama had returned to the temple, albeit a bit dizzy. She also doesn't quite recall what happened.

Swim Swim had been busy sorting out the Magical Candy she took from Snow White.

Originally, Swim Swim had 826 Magical Candies. After the operation, she had 2914.

Subtracting her actual Magical Candy amount, that means that she successfully stole 2088 Magical Candies!

A successful operation. 2088.

“2088!? How on earth did she gather this much candies? That’s more than double our amount!”

The twins were ecstatic

“She’s loaded with candy, sis! Now *we’ll* be loaded with candy!” “Oooh, I can’t wait!”

Ruler mulled over the candy.

“Hmm, so what *are* we to do with the candies?”

The twins immediately answered

“Oh! I already thought of that! We’ve got 2088 right? We’ll divide ‘em up by 5! Everyone gets 417, and there’ll only be 3 candies left!” “You’re *so* smart, sis! Magical!!!”

“Hmm… Nope. I don’t like your calculation”

It’s not the calculation that Ruler doesn’t like. It’s the method of distribution.

“What’s wrong with my math? It’s correct math! I double checked!” “Did sis made a mistake?”

“No, it’s not that. Division is not the proper way of distributing the Magical Candies. Especially not after you botched the plan.”

The 4 Magical Girls were looking at Ruler confusingly. They were wondering what her plan was.

Ruler folded her arms and explained.

“It’s really simple. We divide up the candy based on the effort made by each person! Since I’m the one that made the plan, we divide 2088 by 2 to make 1044. That’s my share. Swim Swim stole the candies, so we divide 1044 by 2 to make 522. Meanwhile, *you* three botched up the distraction plan, so we divide 522 by 3 to make 174. That’s how much you three get.”

The temple was silent. Partly out of disbelief, partly out of fear of how this distribution method will mean.

Ruler broke the silence.

“What? Complaining? This is a just reward. If everything is equal, then we can’t separate the hard workers from the lazy ones!”

Ruler looked at all of them one by one.

The twins averted their eyes. Tama drooped her ears. Swim Swim merely looked ahead, in an expressionless face as usual.

“Well, I hope this is a lesson learnt. I’ve been too soft on you. If we’re going to survive the next few weeks, we all need to work hard. Let’s not forget that there are more powerful opponents ahead.”

The others were silent. Ruler sat on her throne.

“Well. I guess you all never heard of the term ‘you reap what you sow’. *Sigh*, guess it can’t be helped.”

MAGICAL GIRL WEEKEND CHAT
PART 2

Fav: Well then, it’s time for the Weekly Chat!

Fav: But strange… there’s less people around now, Pon!

Fav: Where’d you all go?

Fav: You should all participate if possible, Pon!

Fav: You could of course read the logs when this is done, but that’s no fun, Pon!

Fav: Keep a cheerful attitude! It’s what Magical Girls do, Pon!

Fav: But I digress

Fav: Let’s move on to the important announcements!

Fav: A new Magical Girl will appear this week, Pon! She has already been selected!

Fav: But… It looks like she’d rather not join this week’s chat. Probably shy, Pon!

Fav: However, I promise you that she'll make her first introduction in next week's chat, Pon!

Fav: Man… you guys are in a *really* sour mood today, Pon!

Fav: This week, we'll announce the one with the lowest Magical Candies, Pon!

Fav: Right. So, the one with the lowest Magical Candies this week is…

Fav: Ruler!

Fav: Hm… Disappointing. I don't like it myself, especially not after the work she's been through this week.

Fav: But! It's not my judgement, Pon!

Fav: The one with the most Magical Candies, on the other hand, is Snow White, Pon!

Fav: Two weeks in a row! Congratulations, Snow White!

Fav: Everyone work hard to become the top, Pon!

Fav: Bye bye!

Participation rate has lowered. Only 6 people showed up for the live announcement.

Tama, Swim Swim, the Peaky Angels, Ruler, and Clamberry.

"Whoa… that went down interestingly, sis" "Magi-cool!"

The Peaky Angels didn't hide their excitement. They laughed, they hi-5'd, they hugged. They went over to Swim Swim and hugged her as well.

Swim Swim had a blank expression on her face, while Tama nervously looked at Ruler, who was still in shock.

"…Why?" Ruler shouted as she stood up.

“HOW!? WHY!? HOW!” she screamed as she stood up with a scared expression on her face. She began to wobble. Pain in her chest.

She began to transform into her human form. Mid-20s, wearing cardigans. Her chest hurts. She can feel her life going away.

Swim Swim stood up and walked over to Ruler. As Ruler began to collapse, Swim Swim caught her.

Swim Swim looked her in the eye.

“It’s okay. Everything will be okay,” said Swim Swim in a calm voice. Ruler slowly loses her breath, and as her body settles, she was gone.

Swim Swim put her down on the floor, with the 4 Magical Girls surrounding the body lying before them in a circle.

“The bossy one’s gone, sis!” “All she did was call us names and insult us, sis!”

The Peaky Angels were grinning.

“Wait, what are we gonna do with the body, sis?” “We could bury it easily. Tama’s power makes it simple, right Tama?”

Tama was covering her mouth in shock. She had tears slowly forming, and began to cry.

Swim Swim looked over at Tama. She smiled warmly and stroked her head.

“Don’t worry, Tama. I’ll take care of burying the body. You stay here, okay?”

Silently, Swim Swim carried Ruler’s body in her arms and left for the entrance.

Walking slowly, she recalled memories with Ruler as she walked by the various landmarks. The front gate to the temple. Ruler always told her to keep it clean.

The town was quiet. There was no wind. The streetlamps were off. It’s as if the whole atmosphere knew what a sad time this was.

Swim Swim adored Ruler.

When she first became a Magical Girl, Ruler was her mentor. A princess, she was perfect in every way.

Ruler taught her the way of life of a Magical Girl. At first, Swim Swim was lost, but Ruler showed her the way.

Soon, Swim Swim began to miss school so that she could focus on her Magical Girl training. Eventually, Swim Swim's human form was never seen again.

Swim Swim was loyal to Ruler since then. Faithfully following her every word.

[Everyone must strive to become as the leader. In order for the group as a whole to function properly]

Swim Swim understood that. She longed to become like Ruler. She longed to become the person Ruler was. She wanted to become Ruler.

Ruler was powerful, strong, clever, beautiful. The ideal leader.

However, Swim Swim had noticed that the other Magical Girls under her didn't consider her as their leader. They would always complain. They followed only out of fear, not respect.

Ruler had no longer become the ideal Ruler to her followers.

It was up to Swim Swim to fix this problem.

But there can't be two Rulers. There needs to only be one leader. There can't be two. There can only be one.

If Swim Swim wanted to become Ruler. Then Ruler cannot be Ruler.

But Swim Swim respected Ruler, she can't bring herself to harm Ruler.

However, this… she didn't kill Ruler. This wasn't her doing.

She saw her chance. She saw her chance a while ago, and acted on it. The plan. The plan of stealing candies.

It was perfect.

Eliminating Ruler was difficult. Using her power, she could easily command other Magical Girls to stop. How troublesome.

But Swim Swim knew how it worked. Ruler needed the scepter.

Thus, she waited patiently for a moment where Ruler was vulnerable. For example, when Ruler had the scepter to control Snow White.

The Magical Candies were the key.

Snow White had plenty. She had 50,000.

Swim Swim took 37,000.

She stashed 35,000 with Tama on the way back to the temple. She kept only 2,000.

She had arranged for Fav to distribute the remaining candies she had. As this was Swim Swim's willingness, and since she was giving, not taking, Fav was able to distribute them among the other Magical Girls.

Swim Swim had told Fav to distribute roughly 3,000 Magical Candies to the other Magical Girls, except for Ruler and Snow White.

Snow White had enough candy to not be eliminated, whilst Ruler…

Swim Swim only revealed that she had 2088 candies. If Ruler were to be greedy and take all 2088…

…She would still have the lowest amount, since other Magical Girls would have over 3000.

Swim Swim revealed this plan to the Peaky Angels, who gleefully accepted. Tama was also in on the plan, although Tama felt extremely guilty about it.

At last, it was executed, and Ruler was gone.

The other 3 Magical Girls, the twins and Tama, had recognized Swim Swim as their leader.

She had become the new Ruler.

Swim Swim stopped. This was the end of the alley where she travelled. She laid down Ruler's body.

Swim Swim gently closed Ruler's eyes, and bowed down before her.

"Farewell. Thank you very much for everything you've done. I won't disappoint you"

She stood back up, with tears rolling down her cheek.

Although this was necessary, she was still filled with grief that Ruler had to die. She would rather Ruler live somehow, but that was not an option anymore.

She turned around and walked back into the temple, wiping her tears away.

CHAPTER 3:
MAGICAL KNIGHT

The Ginko tree in Main Street had gone through its seasonal change. It was a large tree, planted in the middle of the square.

People use it to predict when the seasons will change. The tree was big enough, and it was a popular tourist spot.

Right now, the sky is a warm rusted color. Winter is near.

Shizuku Ashuu closed the curtains. She turned around to the other girl in the room. She smiled at her.

"Did you know that from the 6th floor, you can see about two blocks away before everyone seems to blur into the horizon?"

The other girl laughed at the statement.

"Shizuku, can you really be thinking about something like that right now?"

"Magical Girls are perceptive you know. You need to be aware of your surroundings"

“There’s better places to think about things like that then my room, don’t you think?”

Nana Habutae spoke while drinking her medicine for the day.

Shizuku went over to Nana, lured by the sweet smile of her face.

Nana Habutae was a Magical Girl. She was normally known as *Sister Nana*.

It’s been a while since she genuinely smiled and laughed like this. For the past few days, it’s been very rough for her.

This mansion belonged to Nana. Shizuku often stayed over here. Shizuku would only come home once a week.

Shizuku was also a Magical Girl. She was known as *Weiss Winterprison*.

Both girls had fairly similar faces in their normal and Magical Girl forms.

Shizuku’s relationship with Nana was a special one. Ever since Middle School, Shizuku had learned that she was interested in women.

While she has dated men in the past, she’s confident that she prefers women instead.

Throughout her life, however, many of her relationships started and ended quickly. Nana was different.

Shizuku met Nana during a University seminar. Afterwards, they started talking. Soon, they spent the semester holiday together.

They dated ever since.

One day, Nana played a game called *Magical Girl Raising Project*. She invited Shizuku to play with her.

By coincidence, or maybe fate, both of them were chosen to become Magical Girls.

After all, what were the chances? Shizuku and Nana’s relationship grew stronger since that moment.

Shizuku sat down at the sofa, and had her legs on the armrest. She was in a relaxed mood today.

Nana shook her head. Bad manners she would say.

For Shizuku, this was a rare time to relax. Most of the time, she would be aware of any danger coming their way.

The room was pretty soothing in itself. The bookshelves were full. Romance novels, manga, and poetry.

The wallpaper was light pink, with some heart symbols in it too.

There was also a bulletin board with pictures of Shizuku and Nana. There was one particular picture where both of them were laughing together. It was a bit slanted.

Shizuku stood up, went to the picture, unpinned it, and straightened it out before she pinned it to the board again.

“Such attention to detail. A perfectionist as always”

“Nothing wrong with a little perfectionism now and then”

“I know you get nervous when you see things out of order”

“My, you’ve noticed”

Nana laughed. She enjoyed Shizuku’s company.

“Please don’t laugh when you’re using the stove. We might get burnt cooking”

Shizuku went back to the couch.

“So, are we having curry today?” asked Shizuku

“Close, but not quite. Something different”

“Hm, so, stew?”

“Correct. Udo Cream Stew! It’ll take a while to prepare, so please wait a bit, okay?”

Shizuku was a bit worried. Creamed Stew? Nana hasn't been eating any big meals lately.

Shizuku knew the reason. Nana was rather self-conscious of her body weight, so she usually eats light and small meals.

While Shizuku didn't mind, she always tried to nudge Nana to be a bit more carefree with her choices.

'*As long as you're healthy, it shouldn't matter what food you eat*'

Nana always replied with the same response.

'*Well, I'm a bit skinnier as a Magical Girl. Surely you understand why I'd like my human form to be, too!*'

Shizuku didn't understand, but still, she cooperated, if only for Nana's sake.

Recently, Nana had been keen on eating mostly vegetables. She'd learned to cook them, and was quite pleased with the results.

Considering that they live near the mountains, the variety of vegetables have been a lot more exotic than normal.

Shizuku didn't know much about cooking or those things, but she's just glad that Nana was happy. As for her, the taste of the vegetables didn't really suit her, but she often just toughed it out and ate it with Nana anyways.

Nana being happy was all that mattered. Recently, events have made it harder for Nana to even smile.

Shizuku remembered when things weren't like this. Nana was happy. She loved helping people as a Magical Girl. Now, with over 16 people, they suddenly have to compete with each other to stay as a Magical Girl. To stay alive.

Counting the new Magical Girl that will appear this week, at least according to Fav, that means there's 14 left.

If what Fav said is true, and if they're looking to halve the number to 8, then only 6 Magical Girls will be eliminated before all this stops.

6 weeks. A long time. A lot can happen in that time.

Shizuku will make sure that Nana will not die within those 6 weeks, no matter what it takes.

Nemurin. Ruler. Those two were the ones that were eliminated first. Now it seems they've died.

She knew that this won't just be a straightforward candy grab competition. A few days ago, she and other Magical Girls received a large amount of Magical Candies from Swim Swim, free of charge.

The sudden donation, combined with Ruler's death screamed foul play.

Shizuku knows that Swim Swim was close to Ruler, so if this were connected, that means she's betrayed her. Shizuku needed to be careful, for Nana's sake.

The thought of Nana dying made her shudder. She focused on other things. The food.

"So, after the stew, I'll be heading out. You have plans?" asked Shizuku.

"Yes. I plan to go to town tonight"

"Tonight? It's dangerous these days. I've got a bad feeling"

"It won't be a danger if you come with me, Shizuku. However, even if you choose not to come along, I must go. It's important that it's today"

"What's so important?"

"Clamberry has made contact with me. She wanted to meet personally. It appears word of our activities in securing alliances has gotten around. Now we can work together"

Nana smiled again.

Shizuku knew how much Nana constantly preached about working together. She hasn't seen Nana this happy in a long time.

She still remembered their encounter with Top Speed and Ripple. Top Speed was okay enough, but Ripple was just hostile.

It didn't matter now. Shizuku was glad that Nana was happy.

Shizuku approached Nana and warmly embraced her.

The meeting time was 2 AM. On a quarry by the mountainside. The wilderness. Away from the city.

To be honest, they've never seen Clamberry. Not in the flesh before. Even during the chats, she usually stays quiet.

Clamberry rarely talks on the Weekend Chats, but she does provide music. She tends to sit in the corner and play her instruments.

If you weren't a regular like Winterprison was, then you probably didn't even know Clamberry existed.

Winterprison knew more than anyone that just because you participate in the Weekend Chat, doesn't mean you want to talk.

Still, Winterprison had to admire her partner's willingness to see the good in people. Her ideology is that of a good person.

Winterprison had to play the part of the cautious one. She was prepared for anything.

They don't know anything about Clamberry. Her motives, her powers, her personality. If Clamberry wanted to kill them, Winterprison would be ready for a fight.

In the meeting spot, Clamberry arrived in perfect time.

"Good evening, Sister Nana. Good evening, Winterprison"

"Good evening, Forest Musician Clamberry"

"Clamberry will suffice."

"Understood, Clamberry. We've seen you in the chats, but this is the first time we've seen you in person"

"Same with me. Seems my predictions about you two were correct"

Winterprison had been looking over at Clamberry. She had never seen her talk before, but based on how she's conversing now, she sounds like someone who has socialized a lot.

She had long blonde hair, pointed ears like an elf. All throughout her body were vines, with large flowers blooming everywhere too.

She wore a brown jacket with frills, and what looked like a white dress underneath.

She looked to be around her 20s.

Winterprison had remained silent while Sister Nana talked with Clamberry. After Sister Nana's long speech, Clamberry slowly opened her mouth.

"I'd like to ask you some questions, if that's alright"

"We'll try to answer to the best of our ability"

"Very well. First, why are you even bothering to do this in the first place?"

"Huh?"

Sister Nana glanced back and Winterprison, her expression clearly a sign of confusion, asking for support.

Winterprison stepped closer, she removed her hands from her pocket.

"What do you mean?"

Clamberry smiled.

"You don't think that this isn't in the spirit of the game?"

Winterprison braced herself. This could turn bad.

Clamberry continued.

"Winterprison. Ever since I heard rumors of you, I've wanted to fight"

"Excuse me?"

“I know you’re the type to throw yourself at an enemy to protect your partner.”

Winterprison scanned her surroundings. Cliffs on the left. Rocks on the right. No sign of any ambush. She can fight here.

Clamberry smiled and quickly closed in on the distance between her and Winterprison.

In a flash, Clamberry delivered a high kick to Winterprison. Reacting quickly, Winterprison blocked it with her left arm.

The sound of bone crunching could be heard. The force of the kick was huge. Winterprison was knocked back.

Sister Nana let out a small shriek.

Clamberry sped up to Winterprison, but before she reached her, Winterprison used her Magical Skill.

Winterprison’s Magical Skill is the ability to create walls of any size and thickness. However, the materials are based on the local terrain, so rocks will have to do.

Winterprison made an 11 meter wall, about 3 meters thick just in front of her and Clamberry. If she caught Clamberry by surprise, Clamberry would hit the wall at a high speed.

Unfortunately, the wall itself didn’t stop Clamberry. The elf Magical Girl punched through Winterprison’s stone wall and charged straight at Winterprison. She launched a kick at her, which Winterprison barely managed to dodge by dropping to the ground.

Clamberry didn’t relent. Her movements ebbed and flowed, like a wave, like a dancer. Adapting, always figuring out the next step.

Winterprison dodged and blocked, but still got hit in various places. This was unreal.

Clamberry’s physical abilities far outclass any Magical Girl she knew. It’s as if Clamberry has trained herself in fighting.

“Winterprison!” yelled Sister Nana

“Sister Nana! Get back!”

Right. The priority is taking the enemy *away* from Sister Nana. As long as she's safe, that's all that matters.

Winterprison took a step back. She raised another wall. It's not working.

This strategy is failing. Her walls are nothing to Clamberry.

Make a wall. Clamberry climbs it. Make a wall. Clamberry destroys it. Make a wall. Clamberry jumps over it.

Winterprison needed to fight smarter, but it's hard when your opponent isn't giving you any time to think.

Hand-to-hand combat. Not good.

Low kick. Blocked by Winterprison's left arm. Pain. Bones crunching, muscles strained.

Low-to-High kick. Aimed directly at Winterprison's head. Block. Dodge. Avoid it. Avoid it. Too tired. Too fast.

A kick went past Winterprison's guard. It struck her ribs. Heavy blow. Air is being thrown out of her lungs. Clamberry didn't hold back.

A kick to Winterprison's knee. A punch to her face. Cheekbones broken. Coughing blood. Wounded badly. Ears ringing. Vision blurring. Can't lose. Must stay awake.

Suddenly, Winterprison felt a surge of magical energy. Her body felt strong and empowered. This wasn't adrenaline.

This was Sister Nana supporting her.

Winterprison used her scarf. A thick muffler, and quickly tied it to Clamberry's shin.

Unlike what most people might think. Winterprison's scarf isn't decorative. It's a weapon.

With one swift move, she entangled Clamberry, catching her off balance, then pushed her back with a kick.

Now's her chance. As Clamberry is falling backwards. Winterprison erected a wall.

Clamberry's head impacted with the stone wall. Blood dripping from her head. She tumbled into the hard gravel floor, rolling. Disoriented.

Winterprison sealed off the exits. She went straight to Clamberry. No mercy.

Clamberry was lying on the ground, still disoriented. Winterprison kicked her and sat on top of her, trapping her from moving.

Winterprison punched Clamberry's face.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, she won't stop hitting her. Every blow was filled with anger and determination.

"Winterprison! Behind you!"

Winterprison heard Sister Nana's voice, and instinctively looked behind her. There was nothing.

Winterprison looked at Sister Nana confusingly. Sister Nana was also in shock.

A blow to the back of Winterprison's head. Dizzy. Hard.

Winterprison was knocked off from Clamberry. Both Magical Girls down on the ground. Dazed. Disoriented.

Winterprison recalled the voice. That sounded like Sister Nana, but there was nothing behind her. Did Sister Nana purposefully distract Winterprison? No, there was no need. Which means…

…Was that Clamberry's Magical Skill?

Winterprison struggled to get up. Every muscle in her body screamed pain. She could see Clamberry also feeling the same thing. Only one thing was on Winterprison's mind now.

Escape.

Winterprison built a large wall between her and Clamberry. It'll take a while for Clamberry to break it in her state.

Winterprison grabbed Sister Nana, carried her, and jumped off the cliffs to safety.

They escaped.

From the top of the cliffs, Clamberry watched as Winterprison and Sister Nana made their escape.

Clamberry was lightly wounded, but her senses are enhanced. Especially her hearing.

It actually wouldn't be a problem in her condition right now. She was confident she could catch them and finish the fight. However, she decided against it.

"They got away, Pon!"

She heard that high shrilly childlike voice. Such an annoying voice.

It came from her Magical Phone.

"You don't think Sister Nana will tell anyone else about this, Pon? Won't you be in danger then, Pon?"

"I doubt it. Let her try and tell someone. Allies are few and far between. Besides, I've already accomplished what I needed"

Clamberry had wanted to test the extent of her power. Sister Nana and Weiss Winterprison were the ideal choices to practice with.

They were one of the most skilled Magical Girls. Winterprison is considered one of the strongest veterans of all the 16.

Not only that, but Winterprison and Sister Nana were said to have impeccable teamwork. No other Magical Girl pair was able to state the same.

Clamberry wanted to see how long she could hold out before the most powerful before she had to resort to using her magic.

Winterprison used hers, and Clamberry managed to endure. Sister Nana even used hers on Winterprison, and Clamberry still managed to endure.

It took a while before Clamberry had to use her Magical Skill.

The ability to manipulate soundwaves.

Other than hearing large distances, there's a lot of applications for this seemingly small ability.

One of them being to mimic a person's voice.

'*Winterprison! Behind you!*'

She wasn't sure if it'll work, but it looked like it did. Clamberry knew she could count on her powers in the heat of a battle.

Still, she hadn't seen that kind of ferocity that Winterprison displayed for a while. It was the kind of ferocity that only happened with a certain special someone.

Winterprison wasn't fighting for herself. She was fighting for Sister Nana.

Without Sister Nana, Winterprison wouldn't be fighting as viciously. Ironically, Sister Nana is both a burden and a strength.

This kind of fierceness could only come from a person in love.

Ah, so it was love that motivated Winterprison. Such a simple emotion, yet it empowers a lot of people.

Clamberry knew that fighting Winterprison could be fatal for her. Still, the Forest Musician had a taste for combat.

She wiped the blood dripping from her nose and smiled.

Swim Swim became the new leader.

However, she still enforced the basics that Ruler had laid out before.

Unlike Ruler however, she had lesser restrictions when it came to leading her team, since she didn't want to be disapproved by her subjects.

Still, her priorities have not changed. Instead of collecting candy, they still looked to taking them by force. It's a lot easier and more productive.

Swim Swim recalled the fact that the 3-against-1 fight that Tama and the Peaky Angels had was nearly lost. They had retreated to her and Ruler at the last moment.

If Snow White was as strong as La Pucelle. If La Pucelle had been stronger than they thought.

Then *close victory* would've been turned into *absolute defeat*.

This was because they fought head on.

If they did a sneak attack. If only they didn't announce their presence. They'd have a better chance of winning.

Swim Swim was thinking of how to better collect candy. What to do. How should we do it.

She began to consider the best way to neutralize her opponents, in order to take their candy away easier.

Swim Swim thought hard. She planned and planned.

The Peaky Angels came forward with a plan of their own.

"So, how do we successfully pull a rug on other Magical Girls' careers?" "A negativity campaign! Magi-Cool, don't you think, sis?"

Without further ado, the Peaky Angels began to head to the Magical Girl sightings website. They started posting rumors about the other Magical Girls.

'*The White Magical Girl is extorting money from people for help*'

'*The witch didn't stop yelling at my kids*'

'*A ninja Magical Girl attacked me at random*'

'*The Magical Girl nun ignored my cries for help*'

Swim Swim wondered if Ruler would approve of this method, or if she would have better plans. Ruler had always been better at these things.

For now, Swim Swim had to do what she can.

“Thank you for the meal”

Koyuki had finished eating dinner. She drank the cup until it was empty, then silently stayed at the dinner table.

Koyuki’s father looked at his daughter. His face was a mixture of concern and curiosity.

She had been quiet for the entirety of dinner.

“You okay?”

“Huh, oh… it’s nothing”

The Himekawa household usually has normal family dinners. Only a bit of talking. Mostly silence. You could even hear Koyuki’s mother washing dishes in the kitchen.

“Are you doing okay, Koyuki? What’s dad talking about?” asked Koyuki’s mother.

“It’s nothing, mom. I’m fine! Just a little bit sick”

Koyuki looked at her father. She was wearing pajamas, getting ready for bed. People always say she’s like her father. Both are always concerned for others. Koyuki couldn’t seem to understand what they meant, though.

“Your mom’s worried about you, Koyuki. You eat less rice than usual, you don’t even play with your chopsticks anymore, and you’ve been down since yesterday. She’s very worried”

“I told you not to tell her!” yelled a loud voice from the kitchen.

“It’s just that… today, you’re not as energetic as you used to be, Koyuki. Still, as long as you’re healthy and you say you’re okay, then we’re okay”

“Hm? Mhm” replied Koyuki silently.

“If there’s a problem, you know you can tell us, right? We’ll figure it out together”

“I know…”

“Is it a lover’s quarrel”

“No! Nothing like that! I’m… I’m going to bed now”

Koyuki stood up from her chair, and quickly ran upstairs. She closed the room to her bedroom and fell on her bed.

She had been through a period of worry, after what happened.

All she could think about was Souta.

La Pucelle…

Koyuki shook off the image from her mind and shook her head furiously. She lay on her bed, sighing.

High School, Part-Time job, Magical Girl.

She’s got to think about college, her job is average but doesn’t pay much, and her life is actually under constant threat as a Magical Girl.

How did she get here again?

Kano had a lot of time to ponder over her life choices. The nearest train stop was about a 5-minute walk.

The train ride itself would take about 35 minutes.

At home, she had dinner, and she could always take an extra-long bath, for double relaxation while thinking about how she ended up here.

Plenty of time to meditate.

Oh right, it’s the end of her first semester as an 11th grader. That means tests. That means stress. Yay.

She doesn’t have much money to take the train every day. When she graduates to 12th grade, she’ll have to buy a bicycle.

Might as well enjoy the train rides while you can, Kano.

The train was full of students that were talking and laughing with each other. Kano took a seat and looked out the window.

The scenery changes as she passes through the districts.

A hotel with a red diamond as a large sign. Fairly expensive hotel, that one was.

A shop that's famous for their delicious dumplings. Though, they could use some help with their garbage, since it attracts crows.

The shopkeeper was an arrogant guy who doesn't listen to advice, so it couldn't be helped.

The municipal building. A big one. However, the first and second floors were a bit run-down, and there's even a hole in the second floor. If they don't fix it soon, someone's going to have a work accident.

Kano wonders if Top Speed ever has these thoughts as she was zooming through the city.

A man in a business suit sitting on a bench. Kano wondered if he had a steady job, a nice income. Probably better than what she had.

As the train made its way to the final stop, Kano took out her smartphone from her pocket.

This wasn't her Magical Phone, but just your regular smartphone.

She browsed to the Magical Girl sightings website. As usual, the updates have been plenty, but the most sightings were still Snow White.

When Kano patrols the city, she often thinks of two things.

Whether she's just trying to get more Magical Candy, or if she actually wants to help everyone she sees.

2 months ago, she would've only had the former in her mind.

Kano thought that constantly helping strangers was just being annoying, not minding your own business.

Recently however, she'd been considering the latter.

Maybe it's because she always sees Snow White doing all these things. Maybe it's affecting her. She can't let it affect her too much. There's no point in trying to help everyone, since that's physically impossible.

Kano wondered if Snow White had these thoughts.

The train announced the arrival to Kano's stop. Kano put her smartphone away.

Weiss Winterprison took losing way harder than she should. Her mental state was not well. She was highly disappointed in her performance.

To think, she let Sister Nana be in danger with someone who was supposedly an ally.

Not only that, but Winterprison lost. She couldn't protect Sister Nana. If Winterprison had fallen unconscious during the fight, or had died, then Sister Nana would've been finished.

She was angry. She hadn't fought to kill. If she'd just taken the chance to kill Clamberry.

Winterprison swore to herself, the next time they meet Clamberry, she'll crush her body until it was no more.

However, Sister Nana couldn't rest. Just a day after the fight with Clamberry, they were preparing.

Preparing for their duties as a mentor.

They were selected to become the mentor of the new Magical Girl that's arriving this week.

Winterprison had argued with Sister Nana for them to postpone it, or cancel it entirely.

However, Sister Nana's kindheartedness convinced Winterprison to give the new Magical Girl a chance

While walking behind Sister Nana, Winterprison thought of one thing.

If this new Magical Girl ever hurt Sister Nana, Winterprison would never forgive her.

Nightfall at Kobikichou.

During a time like this, almost nobody could see the hidden Magical Girls.

They weren't hidden in some skyscraper, nor were they hiding in the corners of an alley. In fact, they were in the sidelines.

The cause is that 3 of them were wearing dark clothing, and the streetlights in this part of the city were mostly broken.

That, and they were also standing in front of an abandoned factory. Shut down due to mounting debt that the owner couldn't pay.

Nowadays, people who come here are either teenagers out for a dare, thieves trying to steal something from the factory, or maybe just some weird folks.

Sister Nana and Winterprison were here to meet their new trainee. A rookie Magical Girl which they were to mentor.

Sister Nana was a saint, willing to help anyone before herself, and Winterprison was her eternal bodyguard.

The Magical Girl in front of them was rather young and short.

Her outfit reminded Winterprison of a book that Sister Nana had at home. *Alice in Wonderland*. Yeah, this girl looked strangely like the main protagonist of *Alice in Wonderland*, except.

Where Alice was blonde haired and had a blue dress.

This girl was black haired and had a black dress.

Her skin was pale white, and she had black marks under her eyes. Her hands drooped without strength, and she stood slightly arched. It's a strange, quite eerie combination.

The girl itself was pretty. She had the looks of a beautiful girl at her age, her hair, face, shirt. All of them were tidy.

But the way the elements of her attire combined made her look creepy. Almost as if she was a corpse.

Not to mention she was holding a plush rabbit on her right arm in such a way that it seemed to emphasize her creepiness.

Fav had introduced her by name to the two.

Hardgore Alice.

Sister Nana had given her a warm welcome, and explained the current situation. Alice's response was to simply nod.

She stared at Winterprison, and when she did, Winterprison felt a chill up her spine. Whoever this child was, she wasn't at all disturbed at the prospect of possible death, and simply accepted it with a small nod.

Sister Nana seemed to be okay with her, but Sister Nana is kindhearted. It was Winterprison's job to be the cautious one.

Still, it's not like she did anything wrong. It's just that she gives off a rather creepy vibe.

As if the protagonist of Alice in Wonderland had decided to go to a funeral… and she was the corpse… and she dressed up to her own funeral. That kind of creepy.

But Winterprison didn't want to be the bad guy. Maybe she was just paranoid after her encounters with Clamberry yesterday, and Calamity Mary nearly shooting Sister Nana a few days ago. She'd been wary of strangers after that.

But maybe she should be more open. She looked at Alice, and she nodded and smiled, acknowledging her.

La Pucelle was deep in regret.

Deeply, deeply, deeply, deeply, deeply, deeply in regret.

He was so stupid.

He was so excited about the ability to actually share candies with Snow White that he forgot to tell her about the risks, and he didn't even consider it himself. He should've known someone would come steal Snow White's candies. She had the most.

The steel tower where they usually meet was now reduced to rubble. It'll be a while before it gets rebuilt.

It's his fault that they found it. He should've double checked his chat logs. That's basically public information now. What kind of secret meeting spot is that supposed to be?

It was his fault. He caused all of this. He was just too careless. If he had been a little more vigilant.

He also didn't understand Snow White. Snow White never wanted to fight anyone. Yet, when he was presented with the opportunity to fight, he took it.

Selfish.

Arrogant.

If he wasn't so busy fighting, he could've gone straight to the steel tower and none of this would've happened. Snow White wouldn't have been in danger. He was lucky that Snow White wasn't killed. If something like that happens again…

…He couldn't let it happen.

Since then, Snow White and La Pucelle have been changing the way they operate.

Meeting places change every day, and they rarely meet up. They would share Magical Candies occasionally.

When they do partner up, they'll do it momentarily, if only for safety of not being attacked by other Magical Girls.

When La Pucelle sees Snow White, she always looks so sad.

30,000 candies… gone.

La Pucelle wanted to cheer her up. He wanted badly to fix what had gone wrong. Seeing Snow White sad made him sad.

He still couldn't believe that a Magical Girl had planned to steal Snow White's candies.

That Magical Girl must have had a big shock when she heard the announcements, and now she's gone.

For as long as La Pucelle knew her, Snow White hated getting into fights, and she hated fighting in general.

Whenever she saw someone else fight, she used to cry because she didn't want them to fight. She wanted peace. Truly an ideal Magical Girl.

La Pucelle remembered the time when Snow White hugged him in the steel tower. She was genuinely happy back then.

Now, he had no idea what she was feeling.

Still, one thing's for sure, Snow White is home now. She's safe, for now.

"Good evening"

"Mm"

A voice from behind him. La Pucelle answered without panic or shock.

La Pucelle could sense her. Third party. He never met her before. At least not in person.

"Tell me. Did you know I was here this whole time?"

"I did"

"And you didn't leave? My, you *are* quite interesting. Where is your friend, I wonder? Where is Snow White?"

“Out of reach. It’s easier if we take shifts. Quiet. Live and learn, right?”

“Hm, so I was wrong. I had heard that you two were inseperable. Well, sometimes reality is different than the truth”

La Pucelle turned around.

He was on a port overlooking the sea. The smell of the tides were strong. It was night, so the stars were shining. The moonlight shone on that day as well.

The Magical Girl in front of him looked older than him. La Pucelle was a teenager, middle school. 8th grade. This woman looked to be in her 20s.

Friend or foe, he didn’t know. Either way, he was calm.

“I’ve heard rumors of you, La Pucelle. You won a 3-on-1 battle just a few days ago, correct?”

“Hardly a victory, given what happened after”

“There’s no need for modesty with me. The facts are clear, regardless of their intentions, your battle with the 3 ended victoriously for you”

“If you want to look at it that way, sure”

“Ever since I’ve heard stories of you, I’ve wanted to fight.”

La Pucelle chuckled, and winked at his would-be opponent.

“A fight? You sure you’re not here for my candy?”

“I am the Forest Musician, Clamberry. I have no need for Magical Candies. What I seek is something sweeter. A worthy opponent”

La Pucelle secretly felt quite embarrassed that he would even consider a low motivation such as *stealing candy*.

Could this woman really just want to fight for the sake of battle.

Well, I guess this is his just rewards. La Pucelle made too much noise in the Magical Girl circle by trying to fight off 3 Magical Girls. He was stupid to show off. Stupid to want a fight like that.

Still, in a way, this is what he asked for, isn't it? A strong opponent to fight for. After his embarrassment at failing to protect Snow White, this is redemption.

He felt like he was in a Shounen manga or anime. He looked Clamberry right in the eye.

Two warriors, seeking to challenge those worthy enough for challenge.

Two warriors, finally seeing eye to eye.

No turning back now.

"My name is La Pucelle. Forest Musician Clamberry. Will you be my opponent"

"Thank you for the opportunity. I won't let it go to waste"

The two Magical Girls drew their weapons.

La Pucelle with a sword.

Clamberry with fists.

La Pucelle looked at his opponent. Flowers all over her outfit. Large flowers.

Flowers in her outfit, like Snow White.

These were different. Snow White's was pure. These were dark. These were large and wild.

If Snow White symbolizes innocence. This… This symbolized…

Raw power.

The moonlight shone. You could smell the sea from here.

It was a peaceful night. You could barely hear the noise.

MAGICAL GIRL WEEKEND CHAT PART 3

Fav: Hello everyone! Let's have a happy chat this week, Pon!

Fav: Huh? Where are you guys? Jeez, only 2 people showed up today, Pon!

Fav: Where are the regulars? They're not here too? Shame, Pon!

Fav: Well, I'd like to have a moment of your time to thank Clamberry, who always shows up every week since the day she became a Magical Girl!

Fav: She always provided us with BGM, Pon!

Fav: Now, I've got 3 news for you today, Pon!

Fav: 2 of them are good news, 1 of them is bad news

Fav: Let's start with some good news first, because I don't like to shower you with bad news

Fav: A new update has been issued to your Magical Phones, Pon!

Fav: You can download 5 brand new items to add to your arsenal! However, they're unique! That means first come, first served, Pon!

Fav: Okay, now for the bad news. I want to start and end on a good note, Pon!

Fav: Unfortunately, La Pucelle has died in an accident

Fav: It breaks my heart to say this, and it breaks my heart that we won't be able to see our dear friend again

Fav: But listen up, you guys! Don't let this sacrifice be meaningless! Work even harder this week, Pon!

Fav: Oh, regarding the most Magical Candies, that announcement won't be made today, on account of the reluctance of said Magical Girl.

Fav: But now let's talk about good news! The last good news also relates to La Pucelle

Fav: This week, there are NO eliminations based on candies. Since La Pucelle has died, it would only be fair to count that as an elimination.

Fav: Again, don't let this death go to waste, and see you all next week!

Fav: Bye-Bye, Pon!

The sound of the BGM stopped. Snow White turned off her Magical Phone. There is no sound. There is nothing.

She had visited the site of the ruined steel tower. This was when she reunited with her friend once. Now it only serves as a memory.

Angrily, she punched the remains of the tower. The dent that it made was deep.

A few days after the chat, there was a funeral. There was a funeral at his house. There was a day of silence at school.

Snow White couldn't focus on anything. She only wailed and cried.

That night, Snow White couldn't sleep. Her body kept twisting uncomfortably. Crying. She couldn't think.

There were things she couldn't even say to him. They'd planned to rekindle their friendship into the future, once all this was over.

Those plans were gone now.

She had to accept the fact. She can't hide behind it. She had to say the words.

La Pucelle is dead.

…Souta is dead…

…and Snow White couldn't save him. She can't do anything now. She could only cry.

Despair. That was all she felt.

There was nothing left.

Nothing else mattered.

CHAPTER 4:
NIGHT OF THE MAGICAL GIRLS

La Pucelle is dead.

La Pucelle is dead, and there were no eliminations this week. Which can only lead to one conclusion.

You won't be eliminated regardless of your candy amount if someone else dies within the week.

You won't be eliminated if you kill someone.

One particular Magical Girl knew this fact. Soon everyone will know this fact.

Soon everyone will kill to survive.

"I take it everything is progressing well?"

"Yeah, yeah. This time you're using social games to gather young people. Thanks to that medium, a *lot* of people have gathered, Pon! Most of them are young. They're hot-blooded, they have a lot of spirit, Pon!"

The Social Game was actually Fav's idea.

As much as Fav liked to give Clamberry the credit, it wasn't her.

Their relationship had mostly been like this since the two first met each other.

Honestly, Clamberry is starting to get rather bored of staying in here. Surely Fav felt annoyed at her too. They had a long history together.

Clamberry laid on her bed and turned on her Magical Phone. She went to the game, *Magical Girl Raising Project*. In the menu were a list of 5 items.

4-Dimensional Bag

A backpack that is able to fit anything. Even something the size of a human. Because it's 4-dimensional, it also has an infinite storage space.

Invisibility Cloak

A cloak that renders the wearer invisible. It even obscures the wearer's scent. Not even dogs could detect them

Weapon

A unique weapon given to a Magical Girl. The weapon will not break from even the strongest Magical Skill. Select any weapon type you'd like. Even name it if you want.

Healing Medicine

Medicine to heal the body and maximize its endurance. It's not an insta-heal potion, however, so do not misunderstand. Also, excessive use of this medicine is poisonous. 10 tablets provided.

Lucky Rabbit's Foot

Will increase your luck when in big trouble. However, you shouldn't rely too much on it, as it's still up to you to be safe. Best used as a trump card last resort.

These items are actually quite common within the *Land of Magic*. However, since they're used for more… radical reasons here. For example, killing. This means that possession of them is technically illegal.

So now, the Magical Girls can't turn back from this game.

Clamberry turned on her Magical Phone.

"Fav"

"Yes, yes, Master? You have a question, Pon?"

“Wouldn’t these items prevent me from finding a worthy opponent? With these items you have, the weak can defeat the strong, no?”

“I think that if you manage to die to someone like that, then you’re not really that strong in reality, Pon!”

Fav said while twirling, sprinkles falling off of him.

“Besides, Magical Girls aren’t just your regular witches, Pon! In the *Land of Magic*, they don’t select people on some screening test. These guys have the potential to become heroes! If you die because you couldn’t beat their trump card, then you failed as a hero, Pon!”

Fav said with a twisted smile.

“Say, Master. Why are you so intent on finding a strong opponent, Pon? Exposing yourself will only attract more danger to you. Surviving is much harder and requires cleverness!”

“You think so?”

“Well, at least with where you’re going, you get your wish to fight at your full power. Also, *I* get to see a wonderful spectacle, Pon! It’s a nice arrangement we have”

“I agree. I’d also like to have a fight worthy of a spectacle”

“Ah, well, what are we waiting for?”

Fav laughed without changing his expression.

“So these items. Are they free?”

“*Magical Girl Raising Project* doesn’t charge any money, Pon! Everything in the game is free!”

“So, what are these numbers below the items? The bag costs 10, the cloak 25, the weapon costs 5, the medicine costs 3, and the rabbit’s foot costs 6”

“Those are price numbers, but they’re definitely not for money, Pon!”

“Then what am I paying?”

“Your life, Pon! You lose 10 years of your life for the bag! 25 for the cloak, and so on! In order for powerful magical items like these to be created, it’s necessary to sacrifice a bit of your lifespan, Pon! Still, in these circumstances, I’d say it’s trivial to sacrifice 10 years of your life if you might die in a week without the item”

Snow White was in an alley somewhere. Somewhere where no one could find her. There were mostly strays and drunks in this alley.

She felt alone in the world, so she came to a place where she felt she could hide from the world and her troubles.

If Snow White was trying to fit in, she fit in perfectly with the alley. Her clothes were dirty, she had bags under her eyes, and she hasn’t slept in a while.

She wiped some sweat off her forehead with the back of her hand and sat down slumped.

Souta Kishibe’s funeral had long passed. The cause of death was apparently ruled a *traffic accident*. They say he was hit by a car. They say it was a stolen car that hit him. The culprit hadn’t been caught.

As she thought of that, tears started flowing again. She wiped them away. Her eyes were red. She had tried to not think about La Pucelle ever since his death, but it just comes back to her. It’s exhausting for her.

Memories start to flow of La Pucelle.

The time they met at the steel tower for the first time. He told her who he really was. Snow White had kept his secret from the other Magical Girls even until now.

Then, she remembered when he pledged to be her knight. To protect her. He fulfilled that promise when he fought off the other Magical Girls. He fought 3 of them at once.

She remembered the descriptions of La Pucelle in the Magical Girl sightings website.

The Magical Knight.

The one story that Snow White remembered. La Pucelle bravely saved a group of children from being hit by a speeding car. They were playing soccer and went into the streets. La Pucelle put his body before the car and stopped it.

Since then, the children have been so happy that they constantly post to the website about him.

Deeper memories started flowing. Childhood memories.

Watching anime with Souta. Sitting in the living room together, side by side. Elementary school.

Snow White remembered when she told Souta, '*I'm going to become a Magical Girl in the future!*'

She remembered Souta's jealous expression. '*Well, I'm going to be one too!*'

The memories came and went. There was no order to it. Everything just flowed. It's all she had left to remember him.

"Sou-Chan… Sou-Chan…" she cried silently.

"Hey, moping around all day isn't useful, Pon! You can't save anyone by crying. Are you going to let La Pucelle's sacrifice be meaningless?"

Hearing the word 'Sacrifice', Snow White's body stiffened.

The person that killed Souta. They say it was a criminal who robbed a car. He hasn't been caught yet.

But Snow White wondered, was it even a regular person? It's a horrible thought, but it makes no sense that Souta could be killed by just some random guy.

Meaning…

…Did a Magical Girl kill him?

One of them. One of the remaining 13 Magical Girls actually killed her best friend.

The thought made her angry.

If she only had these items, she'd…

"Don't be scared, Pon! At least do it for La Pucelle's sake!"

Snow White opened the application. She went to the start menu. She tapped on the item selection screen.

She saw the list of 5 items and their costs.

“So… my lifespan for these, huh?”

Snow White’s breathing turned heavy. She felt the ground shaking. Was it her imagination.

She trembled as she hovered over the ‘Download’ button.

She’ll lose her lifespan. 3 years at minimum. 25 years at maximum.

What would La Pucelle do.

The Invisibility Cloak. That would cost her 25 years of her life. If she had it, she could escape from any unnecessary fights.

As she watched over it, the words ‘SOLD OUT’ suddenly appeared.

She looked at the other items. They were also sold out.

“Ah, well… I told you it’s first come, first served, Pon!”

Snow White dropped her Magical Phone. It made a loud clank as it hit concrete.

She stared into the sky, her face pale and tense.

The Weapon. The Invisibility Cloak. The Healing Medicine.

Swim Swim, Tama, and the Peaky Angels bought these just now.

They also wanted to buy the 4-Dimensional Bag and the Lucky Rabbit’s Foot, but those were sold out when they went to it.

“Guh, I told you to be faster!” “I *was* fast, sis!”

When the Peaky Angels told Swim Swim that the downloaded items were for sale, Swim Swim quickly asked Fav what the prices were. After receiving his answer, she gathered the other 3 Magical Girls.

She had Tama purchase the weapon.

The purchase of the medicine was given to the Peaky Angels. However, they were reluctant. They didn't want to give up any of their lifespan.

So Swim Swim immediately purchased the Invisibility Cloak, taking away 25 years of her life, as initiative.

This amazed the Peaky Angels, who felt bad. They then decided to do it using rock-paper-scissors, and Yunael, who lost, purchased the medicine.

At first, Swim Swim and the rest were unconvinced of Fav's statement that the items took your lifespan. However, when they purchased it, as soon as they tapped the button, they felt a burning sensation in their spine.

The intensity depended on the lifespan lost, thus, Swim Swim felt the most pain from that. Clearly *something* happened.

Nevertheless, Swim Swim was confident in her decision.

Tama asked her a question.

"Swim Swim-Chan. Aren't you scared of dying 25 years early than you're supposed to?"

"I am. I'm terrified"

"So, then… if you're scared, why did you do it?"

"Because I'm your leader. I have to make a good example. I have to make the hard choices"
The 3 Magical Girls were amazed. They respected Swim Swim. Despite her fears, she would be willing to make these decisions.

Tama was never the bravest person. But, she was confident. Confident in Swim Swim, and confident in her plans.

Whenever she's faced with a hard decision, Tama always asked herself,

What would Ruler do?

It's no secret that Tama admires Ruler. Ruler was her mentor, and was like a guardian to her.

When she was in kindergarten, her teachers were her source of protection and care. It's the same in elementary school. Now she's in middle school, and after being a Magical Girl, that role is-

-That role *was* given to Ruler.

Ruler taught her how to live as a Magical Girl, and even offered protection for Tama, who couldn't survive in the outside world regardless.

Sometimes Ruler would get angry and scold her, but Tama didn't think Ruler hated her.

She would sometimes yell at Tama, maybe even hit her. But if Ruler really hated Tama, then she would've kicked her out of the temple. Tama wouldn't be able to do anything about it. She'd certainly be too scared to say no.

There are also times when Ruler genuinely shows affection for Tama. When Ruler pets her or praises her, Tama felt loved.

But now, things have changed.

Swim Swim had eliminated Ruler. Tama didn't know the reasons. Tama was even a part of the plan. Tama felt guilty.

She remembered the day Swim Swim entrusted her with 35,000 candies to keep secret from Ruler. At first Tama asked Swim Swim why, but she wouldn't answer.

Tama was scared. Was she betraying Ruler? But then the Peaky Angels immediately agreed.

"Backstabbing the meanie!?" "Magi-Cool!"

Those were the words they said. Tama didn't know the extent of it. Tama didn't want to get involved, so she just complied.

Now Ruler is dead.

Swim Swim is their new leader, and so far, she also seems very protective of Tama. Unlike Ruler, Swim Swim never really gets mad at Tama. They were both Ruler's apprentices, and so they knew each other.

Swim Swim used to be quiet, but ever since she became the leader, she's taking initiative. Tama wished she could do that.

Now, she's here. She had just traded 5 years of her life to purchase a weapon that she gave to Swim Swim.

Swim Swim is holding the weapon now.

It was like a halberd. Large, pretty long reach too. However, the blade didn't look like a halberd blade. Instead, it looked like a gigantic knife.

The length of this weapon was about 1-meter long.

The Peaky Angels looked at it, amazed.

"What'cha gonna name it?" "Yeah, yeah! What's the weapon's name?"

Swim Swim pondered a bit. She took a moment to think of a proper name. Then, she answered.

"Ruler"

Named after their former leader. It seemed fitting.

The Peaky Angels didn't complain. They just stared at it as Swim Swim began practicing with it. Twirling it around. She had already gotten used to the weapon.

Swim Swim had the weapon, the Peaky Angels had the medicine, and Tama got the Invisibility Cloak.

Swim Swim paid for the cloak with 25 years of her life, but gave it to Tama, while she took the weapon, which cost 5.

Tama questioned her,

“Why did you take the cheaper one instead of mine?”

Swim Swim glanced at Tama

“Because the weapon suits me and my powers. The cloak suits you and your powers. You work better when you’re not seen”

This was true. Tama always had to be positioned somewhere hidden when using her power, at least back when Ruler was in charge.

Swim Swim went over to Tama and stroked her head. Tama felt joy.

“It’s good that you ask questions. Don’t worry, I won’t let you down” said Swim Swim.
If this was Ruler, she would’ve said something like ‘*You fool!’* and probably scolded her. This was…

…This was a nice change.

But still, Tama didn’t feel right. These items, they should’ve been used to help people, but now…

…It looks like the Magical Girls are ready to fight. Swim Swim is determined, and the Peaky Angels are fine with it.

Tama shuddered. What has she gotten herself into?

A large, finely decorated carpet, as well as a nicely high-classed place. Candles, chandeliers, and finely crafted tables.

There was also wine, and of course this was a smoking room.

Not only that, but there was a couch that looked to be something out of a royal palace. Truly, something like this can only come out of royalty.

But that’s not the case. This was a VIP lounge at a local club.

The small robotic Magical Girl looked around for her mentor, the one waiting for her.

Calamity Mary.

To get here, the robotic Magical Girl had to use the backdoor, to which the bouncers would allow her entry.

You probably wouldn't see someone this short enter a place like this normally, but she was given special permission.

This Magical Girl's name was *Magicaroid 44*.

Magicaroid 44 looked exactly like a small robotic android. She had some metallic horn-like objects growing out from her hair, but that could also be explained away as her 'hair'.

To most people, she probably looked like a child cosplaying as a robot. In truth, it was more like she was a robot that looked human.

As a Magical Girl, she certainly didn't feel like she was human on the outside.

She had a jetpack and a sachel on her back, and her skin was metallic, so you couldn't possibly think she was a human at all.

Nevertheless, she didn't care much what people think.

She arrived at the VIP Club room to meet her mentor, and that was all that mattered.

Truth be told, there were lots of rumors about Calamity Mary. She was rumored to have ties with the Mafia, for example. Apparently, according to those rumors, Calamity Mary constantly conducts raids on important targets, and since she's a Magical Girl, hardly anything could beat her.

At least, that's what Magicaroid 44 reads on the Magical Girl sightings website.

The western gunman Magical Girl sits in the sofa, cigarette in her mouth, as she pours some alcoholic beverage into her glass.

"Senpai, you look well today!"

"Flattery will get you nowhere, kid."

Straight to the point as always.

Calamity Mary drank the glass. Magicaroid 44 couldn't tell what kind of alcoholic beverage it was, since she's never had one before, but was still amazed.

Magical Girls don't usually get poisoned by normal means, so intoxicating the body with alcohol would be useless. So is smoking, since you could barely feel the nicotine in the smoke.

Calamity Mary must've done this a lot in her human form, and old habits die hard.

"Senpai! Have you heard about the latest news?"

"You're talking about the items for download? Yeah, I did. What'd you get?"

"Um… I purchased nothing, Senpai. I am fearful of reducing my lifespan"

She couldn't lie to Calamity Mary, so why should she hide the truth from her, anyway?

"Tsk, makes sense, I suppose. I bought the bag. The others were taken already"

Magicaroid 44 felt a bit of shame when Calamity Mary told her that. She should've bought something. Her mentor would risk her life.

Perhaps is best to change the subject.

"Did you also hear about what happened in the chat last time, Senpai?"

"I did. La Pucelle died, right?"

"Yes, but… That's not the important part! No one was eliminated, Senpai!"

"I get the implications. In fact, I quite enjoy it," said Calamity Mary with a nasty smile.

She blew a puff of smoke from her cigarette and grinned.

If eliminations won't occur due to a death of a Magical Girl instead, then the Magical Candy collecting doesn't mean anything.

If you kill someone, you're safe.

Already, Calamity Mary was plotting on who to go after first.

Swim Swim and her little posse? Top Speed and Ripple? Maybe Sister Nana and Weiss Winterprison?

All of these Magical Girls had formed up into teams. It became important. Going solo would be a death sentence at this point. Even Calamity Mary had Magicaroid 44 now.

Still, there are Magical Girls that are still alone, or in Snow White's case, forcefully made to be alone.

Snow White, Clamberry, that new rookie Magical Girl whose name Calamity Mary forgot.

"Senpai, if you'd like to give me a mission. I do not mind. Working together with you has led to my survival, after all"

Calamity Mary began eyeing her. As if to sniff out any possible lies. The woman was fierce with her stare.

Magicaroid 44 knew about Calamity Mary's… randomness. So she wasn't comfortable with this.

Calamity Mary grinned

"So, tell me. What did you pull out of your little satchel today?"

Magicaroid's Magical Skill was rather unorthodox. Her satchel contains 444,444,444 items from the future, and her Magical Skill is to take one useful item from that satchel. The choice is random, and she really wouldn't know how best to use it.

For example, she once pulled out an *Insect Love Potion*. She had no clue what on earth she was supposed to do with it.

Today she pulled out a *Weapon Rack*. A bit more useful, but still not as useful for this situation.

"Interesting pull. Well, let's discuss our strategy then, hm? Of all the Magical Girls, Ruler's little group is nothing. Sister Nana procrastinates in her 'love and peace' speeches. Winterprison and Clamberry seem like they're on each other's throats. Snow White… she's pretty useless on her own"

"And what about me, Magicaroid 44?"

"You, you're my little minion. Here to do what I ask obediently, correct?"

“Then… our cooperation is still established?”

“Of course… With a test”

“A test?”

“I need to see your loyalty. A test will do. It’s a simple test, you only need to do one thing”

“And that would be?”

“Kill one of the Magical Girls. It benefits us both”

Calamity Mary said that with a smile.

“Think of it as peace of mind. Make it flashy, grand, something that won’t be forgotten”

Road signs. About three of them separated far apart. All have concrete bases.

Her kunai were flying in unnatural directions, each time slashing the road signs.

It was as simple as cutting butter. In about 3 minutes, all the road signs were cut off. The concrete bases ripped off and put in a basket.

Ripple came and collected them herself.

Ripple's Magical Skill, *will never miss a target with her shuriken*, apparently works on anything she threw, not just her Shuriken.

Regardless of how she throws the Shurikens or the object, so long as she has a target in mind, they will seek it out no matter what, and change directions accordingly.

Top Speed's broomstick, *Rapid Swallow*, allowed them to travel fast and collect them.

The road signs have been bothering people in the district for a while, so in a way, this was technically 'helping' them.

They'll probably earn less than 100 Magical Candies for this though, since it's not a direct help. Plus, this is… really stretching it.

"Okay, everything's collected! Put 'em in the back"

"Weight…"

"Wait? Wait for what?"

"No, not 'wait'. Weight. Can your broomstick handle it?"

"Oh, you mean the concrete? Don't worry, my broomstick's a tough girl. She can handle it" Reluctantly, Ripple placed the extremely heavy basket on *Rapid Swallow*.

"Alright, let's fly!"

The broomstick flew at an extremely fast speed, with Ripple in the backseat. However…

"Er… it looks like it's a bit slower than usual. Maybe it's just air resistance, hehe…"

Ripple grumbled in an '*I told you so*' tone. She tightened her grip on Top Speed's waist, frustrated at the fact that Top Speed didn't heed her advice.

"Hey now, don't get cranky. We still got the job done! Besides, my broom is still pretty fast!"

"That's not it…"

"It sucks that we didn't get any of the items, but I mean, I didn't exactly think paying with our lifespan was a good deal"

When Ripple and Top Speed browsed at the item category, all of them were sold out. They contacted each other about it, and met up.

Their partnership and activities as a Magical Girl have started to become noticed.

In the Magical Girl sightings site, there's always talk and pictures of '*The Witch and The Ninja*' always being together.

It irritated Ripple, because she wished she had a more reliable partner.

Top Speed was not her idea of a reliable partner. She bowed down and acted humble to Calamity Mary, and she didn't even get any items for them, and now she didn't even listen to Ripple's advice about the weight.

It's all starting to add up to Ripple's frustration.

"Since we don't have any of the items… We could easily be killed, you know?"

"Oh, and who exactly's going to try to kill us?"

"…Other Magical Girls?"

"Ha ha, very funny. You realize that we can easily escape if anyone even tries to attack us, right? This broomstick isn't just for show, y'know?"

"You're saying we're safe in the sky? There *are* Magical Girls who can fly. You know this, right?"

"Sure! Magicaroid 44, The Peaky Angels. None of them can't catch up to the speed of my broomstick! I'm the fastest Magical Girl in the city!"

As Top Speed says that, she places her hands on the handles of her broomstick/motorcycle hybrid.

Ripple couldn't see Top Speed's expression, but her next words were spoken with a different, softer tone.

"Don't worry, Ripple. I'm not gonna let both of us die. Remember, I still got a promise to keep. I'm staying alive for 6 more months. Then… Then maybe I'm fine with dying"

Again with the 6 months thing. Ripple tried to ask Top Speed what happens in 6 months, but she's never given her a proper answer.

Regardless, the two Magical Girls silently fly as the moonlight shone bright in the sky.

The back alley was silent.

Snow White tensed up and looked around. Every noise or scratch kept her on edge.

She heard a noise stepping on concrete. Something was nearby, but she couldn't see what… or who.

She began to nervously sweat. La Pucelle is not coming. It's not him. Nobody should be coming for her. Then who is it?

The stress was too much for her. She looked around, but everything looked like shadows in the dark night sky.

She stood up and ran

Every step she made was filled with heart wrenching terror. She ran as fast as her body can take her, the moonlight made her shadow larger.

Finally, a dark corner, she looked back.

Then she heard it, rhythmic tapping on concrete.

Thump, Thump, Thump

Footsteps?

She was afraid. Finally, she saw the source of the noise. It was a girl. About her height, just a little bit shorter.

Stockings, socks, shoes, dress, bowtie.

She looked like Alice from Alice in Wonderland, except… She was in all black.

Her eyes looked glazed and dead, and she slightly hunched forward in her posture, and had a creepy bunny doll in her right hand just kind of… dangling there.

“Finally… I’ve found you!”

Snow White’s knees were shaking. She tried hard not to let it show.

The black Alice, she looked like she was happy. Her eyes had joy behind them, and the edges of her lips curled up to form a smile.

She stepped forward.

One step. Two step. Three step.

Then suddenly she stopped. The girl in black just stopped. Her head started to tilt. Her eyes wide with shock.

At first it tilted, then it continued, and continued, and…

It fell off of her neck.

Blood vessels and arteries can be seen from her neck stump, and even part of the bone of the spine is jutting out. Blood squirts everywhere, covering Snow White in it.

The black Alice’s body leans forward and falls down with a thump, as her decapitated head rolls to a stop.

It all happened so fast. Snow White couldn’t even blink. Her eyes widen, and she stares at the head of the black Alice.

The pool of blood widens as it continues to squirt from the stump of the black Alice’s neck.

Behind her is the perpetrator.

A robotic Magical Girl. Short. Plastic looking eyes. Standing within the blood of the black Alice.

“Well, I guess this counts as saving you, technically,” she says in a robotic tone of voice.

Snow White still hasn’t blinked. Her brain hasn’t quite processed what just happened before her.

“We have met in the chats before. I am Magicaroid 44”

The robotic Magical Girl had a red satchel that she was carrying. Her eyes are neutral, but the way she acts so calm after having decapitated the black Alice.

“This was a good use of today’s technological pull. My Magical Skill can be useful at times. You should know, I originally considered killing you, Snow White. But then I saw this new Magical Girl, and you seemed troubled by her, so I chose the better option. I have no obligation to kill you now, so you may relax.”

Magicaroid 44 looked at the decapitated head of the girl, and kicked it.

The head rolled slowly as it stopped in front of Snow White, face up, as the eyes of the black Alice stare dead into her.

Snow White was in a trance. She couldn’t keep her eyes off the murder that just occurred.

“Well, I guess it’s time for us to part ways. It was nice while it lasted, but we must part ways. Farewell, Snow White”

The robot Magical Girl raised her right arm.

Crunch

“Gk!?”

Magicaroid 44 looked down at her chest.

There was an arm that protruded from it. No, it wasn’t protruding. That arm passed through her chest.

Blood from Magicaroid 44's chest splattered all over Snow White's face. Her outfit now more red than white.

Magicaroid's chest had been punched through with an arm. But who…

…Oh. The arm that stabbed through Magicaroid 44 was the black Alice. Her body stood up behind Magicaroid 44, and it… punched her.

The body… with the neck stump… with blood still pouring… is standing up…

Her head was still below Snow White… staring at her…

Snow White, who had been silent this whole time had hit her limit. She tried to let out a scream, but she can't seem to do it.

Her eyes rolled back, and she collapsed. Everything became black.

Snow White woke up screaming.

She jolted awake and sat at her bedroom.

…Her bedroom?

Her body was sweating almost everywhere. Cold sweat? Nightmare? The pillow was also moist.

She was in her pajamas.

"Koyuki? Are you okay?" asked her mother from outside.

"I-I'm fine!"

Was that really a dream. The dream felt so real. It can't just be a dream, could it?

Snow White realized that her right hand was clutching something. Slowly, she opened up her hand.

She was holding a fluffy Rabbit's Foot.

MAGICAL GIRL WEEKEND CHAT
PART 4

Fav: Erm…

Fav: Everyone seems to be mastering their items, Pon! Good job, Pon!

Fav: But uh, since no one really shows up live for the chats anymore, I don't think there's any use for introductions, Pon!

Fav: Right, on to the important things! The elimination this week!

Fav: Unfortunately, just like last week, this elimination was not due to low Magical Candy, but due to a death.

Fav: Magicaroid 44 has unfortunately died. Rather gruesomely, Pon!

Fav: But don't let that discourage you! Everyone should always do their best, Pon!

Fav: Oh! And a special thank you for Clamberry for always supplying the chat with BGM. Well, see you around, Pon!

CHAPTER 5:
GOOD RIDDANCE

Swim Swim's Magical Phone started to ring. It was early in the morning.

She picked up the phone.

Tama was curious, but she remained silent and only looked at Swim Swim.

The Peaky Angels was also curious. They listened in very closely, with a smile on their faces, anticipating something.

Swim Swim talked for about 3 minutes. Then, she put down her Magical Phone.

Tama asked first,

“What happened? Is everything alright?”

“I made contact with Sister Nana. She says she wants to meet up with us”

“Seriously!?” “Winterprison’s pretty scary, don’t you think?” “What are we gonna do?” “What’s gonna happen?”

Swim Swim remembered Ruler’s words. She kept them close to her heart.

[A powerful opponent must be defeated before they are able to do anything]

Certainly, Winterprison is the strongest among all of them, so she has to be dealt with before she becomes a threat.

Swim Swim doesn’t know if her fighting skills could even match her. But if it does, then she knows she made the right decision.

She immediately came over to the other 3 and issued her instructions.

Snow White was sitting on a chair in her room, her hand firmly on the desk. The Magical Phone turned on.

On the desk was the fluffy white rabbit’s foot.

“What is this?” asked Snow White.

The reply came from her Magical Phone.

“This is the Lucky Rabbit’s Foot, Pon! It was on sale as a downloadable item earlier, Pon!”

“Okay, but why do I have it?”

“Maybe you found it when someone dropped it?”

“Can’t be. I don’t remember anything like that.”

“Well, it did originally belong to Hardgore Alice, Pon! She bought it, after all”

“Hardgore Alice?”

“She’s the new Magical Girl. Dresses up like Alice in Wonderland, but in all black, Pon!”

The black Alice. That was Hardgore Alice? So that day wasn’t a dream. It was a reality. But then that means…

…The memory of her head falling off her neck. The stump. The headless body.

Snow White felt nauseous. She covered her mouth to prevent herself from puking.

She tried to remember something else to keep her happy.

La Pucelle.

She calmed down, but felt a little sad. La Pucelle was still gone. There’s nothing she can do about that.

So this girl, Hardgore Alice, she was still alive. How?

More importantly, Snow White had this Lucky Rabbit’s Foot. Supposedly, it grants you extreme luck, right?

What kind of luck results in you getting decapitated?

Still, Snow White didn’t feel right accepting this.

“Fav, is there some way you could return this?”

“Er… not in the way you might think, Pon. I could give out Magical Candies that you have because they’re not really physical things, but this is… something you have to do yourself, Pon!”

In truth, Snow White didn’t really want to meet Hardgore Alice face-to-face. She didn’t know anything about the girl. She didn’t know if the girl wanted to kill her or not, or if Hardgore Alice even purposefully gave her this Rabbit’s Foot.

Snow White sighed and put her head on her desk. She was so confused of what's going on right now.

"Don't start crying again, Pon! You've been a mental wreck ever since La Pucelle died. It's not healthy for you at all, Pon!"

Anger.

Snow White knew that. She had been mentally useless ever since that time, and she doesn't need anyone telling her that.

She wanted to yell at Fav, she wanted to smash her Magical Phone, but she can't. There's no point.

"Koyuki! Food's ready!" yelled a voice from downstairs

"I'm coming!"

Calming down, Snow White reached out to turn off her Magical Phone. However, before her fingers reached the off button.

"Wait a bit! you've got a message, Pon!"

"Huh? From who?"

"Sister Nana! She says she wants to meet up with Snow White, Pon!"

There's not much room for Magical Girls to meet each other. Most of them usually stick to pairs.

Snow White and La Pucelle, Sister Nana and Winterprison, Top Speed and Ripple.

With all of N-City being too big for just one Magical Girl, it was common for Magical Girls to be separated into different districts too, for ease of access.

It also divides up responsibility so that the whole city is safer.

For Snow White, this would be her first time seeing Sister Nana and Weiss Winterprison outside the chatroom.

She came to the meeting place prepared.

Sister Nana was waiting patiently, Winterprison was behind her, calmly standing by. Snow White could feel an air of power coming out from Winterprison, but she knows that as long as she doesn't threaten them, Winterprison won't react.

Sister Nana approached Snow White first.

"It's nice to see you, Snow White. Welcome!"

"Yes, thank you. Nice to meet you too"

Sister Nana shook hands, then grabbed hold of Snow White's hand. With a saddened expression, she looked at Snow White.

"I understand that you and La Pucelle were close. Allow me to offer my sincerest apologies. Her death was truly a tragedy for all of us."

Small tears began to form in Snow White's eyes. She wiped them away, and nodded while smiling.

"Thank you. Yes, it's difficult, but I'm handling it."

Sister Nana continued on.

"I'd like to ensure that no other Magical Girl suffers that fate. The tragedy must end right here. Magical Girls must unite so that we can solve this crisis. So I ask you, will you cooperate with us?"

Snow White looked up at Sister Nana.

Now that she remembers it, no other Magical Girl that she's met before in real life have ever offered her friendship.

No one but La Pucelle.

Every single Magical Girl that she's met have been hostile. The other Magical Girls simply saw her as prey.

So this was truly an extreme shock for Snow White.

She was happy to have someone who was friendly again. She nodded vigorously and instinctively hugged Sister Nana.

Perhaps because she was surprised, Sister Nana let out a small chuckle and hugged Snow White back.

Snow White opened her eyes and saw someone behind Sister Nana.

The figure was about her height, maybe a bit shorter. Wearing a black dress. The black Alice. Hardgore Alice.

Except, her body was fine. Everything was intact. Snow White's memories flashed back to that instant where she only had a body but no head.

Snow White let out a scream and nearly tripped backwards.

Sister Nana had a confused expression and looked back at the girl behind her. She calmly asked Snow White.

"Do you two know each other?"

Before Snow White could answer, Hardgore Alice spoke up.

"Yes… She is an acquaintance…"

An acquaintance?

Hardgore Alice had her eyes straight towards Snow Whtie. With a monotone expression, she stated.

"Yesterday, we didn't fully introduce ourselves… We had to part ways because of an accident. My name is Hardgore Alice"

Snow White unconsciously backed away. She was scared of this girl.

Sister Nana closed her eyes and smiled.

“Ah, yes. Then, Hardgore Alice. We can count on your cooperation too, correct?”

“Understood. I’ll cooperate”

With great joy, Sister Nana shakes Hardgore Alice’s hand. Snow White still in the background by Winterprison.

“Well. This is wonderful! We now have four that are willing to work with us! We have appointments to make with other Magical Girls too, so I hope we can continue to work together later on!”

Snow White wanted to chime in. She didn’t want them to leave. She was afraid of being alone with Hardgore Alice.

But she couldn’t. There’s no reason for them to stay.

As the two Magical Girls left, it was only the two of them remaining.

Snow White and Hardgore Alice, alone.

Hardgore Alice glanced at Snow White, and a smile slowly formed. No longer the monotone looking girl, she seemed happy. She started skipping around and walking over to Snow White.

Snow White instinctively backed away.

Perhaps Hardgore Alice was at ease now that Sister Nana and Winterprison had left, but to Snow White, it was rather creepy.

Hardgore Alice approached Snow White and stopped short of her. She eyed Snow White with catlike eyes. Snow White was on the defensive.

Then Snow White remembered something.

She reached out into her pocket and pulled out a furry white rabbit’s leg.

“Um… Is this yours? Fav told me you bought it, so… I thought I’d return it to you. I didn’t steal it or anything like that, it just… I found it… somewhere”

Her words couldn't properly form sentences. Snow White was afraid of what Hardgore Alice might do.

"That's wrong"

"Huh?"

"The rabbit's foot is yours, Snow White"

"Wait… what?"

"I gave it to you, so now it's yours"

"Huh? Why? Why are you giving it to me?"

Hardgore Alice tilted her head. Snow White tensed up. She remembered the time that Hardgore Alice did that, and she remembered her head falling off.

Magicaroid 44 decapitated Hardgore Alice that time.

There's no stitches or bandages, so how is it that she's alive now?

Could it be that her Magical Skill is to come back to life?

"Because it was the right thing to do"

"What?"

"Giving you the Lucky Rabbit's Foot was the right thing to do"

Snow White looked over at Hardgore Alice. To be honest, Snow White didn't know why she was ever scared in the first place.

Yesterday, it's easy to see why Snow White would be afraid of Hardgore Alice.

Not only did Alice take her by surprise, she was also covered in blood, and became a corpse.

Today, she looked very innocent, maybe even naïve.

Snow White closed the palm of her hand, keeping the Lucky Rabbit's Foot.

A majestic water fountain in the middle of town square. It was pouring water in various different patterns, and it was accompanied by the lights that it generated.

A crowd of people gathered around the fountain, some were families, some were couples, some were friends, all of them having a good time around the fountain.

Once a month, on the 15th, a special event occurs where this fountain in N-City is lit up by various colors and patterns. It's different for every month too. For example, in April, the theme was cherries, and so the fountain was colored reddish-pink.

In August, there were fireworks involved, and bright colors within the fountain.

Tourists from all around the world would come here to witness this phenomenon, and it brings a lot of visitors over to N-City.

With the arrival of more people certainly means the potential for more danger from someone.

All the more reason for Magical Girls to keep a lookout for the event.

Top Speed was busy explaining everything to Ripple. She seemed happy enough. Ripple on the other hand just listened in.

They watched over the square through a roof in a nearby building.

Unlike in other places, there really isn't any trouble brewing in their districts. In districts like the red-light district, people might start a fight over a trivial thing like which store has the best food.

In Nakayado, everyone gets along.

Ironically, it's troubling for the Magical Girls that there's no trouble to stop.

Normally, Ripple would be happy for the peace and quiet, but ever since this contest had them compete for the most Magical Candy, she would prefer it if trouble happened so she could stop it.

They've been keeping watch all day. Besides Top Speed and Ripple were empty glasses and Tupperware. Food, all cooked by Top Speed, to be eaten while they wait.

“Ah… it’s good to have quiet days, isn’t it, Ripple?”

“That’s bad…”

“Mm? What’s up?”

“…Nothing. Never mind”

“It’s so beautiful out tonight. The moon is shining beautifully. I’ve never seen it so bright, y’know? Not to mention, everyone’s really enjoying the fountain festival!”

Ripple reached out for the Tupperware. She took a bite out of a piece of chicken. Ripple was frustrated at Top Speed.

She can be hard to deal with, but damn her cooking was amazing. The chicken stew is perfect. Ripple had never tasted anything so delicious.

Top Speed drank something, and offered it to Ripple.

“Would you like some sake?”

“I don’t drink”

“Really? I mean, Magical Girls can’t get drunk regardless, but why’s that?”

“I’m a minor”

“Seriously!? How old are you?”

“…I’m 17”

“You’re *17*!? Wow! I’m 19, myself.”

Ripple was kind of shocked.

19 wasn’t even the legal age to drink, and Top Speed is still drinking her sake. Oh well, it’s not Ripple’s life choices anyways.

“17, huh? So, is school fun?”

“School’s… normal”

“You hang out a lot with your friends?”

“I don’t have friends”

“Family?”

“I don’t have them either. I live alone”

“Huh. Reminds me of me when I was 17. Déjà vu, heh. I used to always think the world was a hard place, and I always thought I was on my own”

Ripple rolled her eyes. She didn’t really like it when someone older told her ‘*I was just like you when I was younger*’.

“Don’t worry though, Ripple. You’ve got the grumpy 17-year old thing down, hehe” winked Top Speed.

Ripple grumbled and took a bite of her chicken.

Suddenly, Ripple’s Magical Phone rang. Fav’s voice came at a high pitched voice, and he appeared on screen.

“Ripple, Ripple!”

“What?”

“It’s Calamity Mary! She says she wants to meet you. Tomorrow at a hotel. She provided the location. She says she *really* wants to meet you, Pon!”

Ripple looked at Top Speed.

Top Speed looked at Ripple.

“No way! Not happening, Ripple. Going there is basically suicide”

“I’ll do it”

“No you won’t! We’re not just going to risk our lives for something like this”

“You’re irresponsible…”

“Excuse me?”

“Tell me seriously why you’re still holding on to that 6 month minimum promise. Give me a good reason why. What’s happening in 6 months”

“Ah- Um…”

Then, Fav’s voice interrupted the two.

“Wait, Ripple! Ripple! Calamity Mary says that she’ll be running a few ‘errands’ of her own there, so she’s really looking forward to seeing you”

Ripple looked at Top Speed.

Top Speed looked at Ripple.

“Man, I really don’t like it when you give me that glaring look, y’know that?”

Swim Swim knew about Calamity Mary. She knew the danger that Calamity Mary posed.

She never quite understood why.

Tama and the Peaky Angels also knew about Calamity Mary. They knew enough to stay away from her, but never quite knew why, other than ‘*she’s insane*’.

Ruler had always avoided Calamity Mary, but Swim Swim knew that Ruler and Calamity Mary had history with each other.

Ruler would always be a bit grumpy when talking with her. Perhaps those two have unfinished business.

Swim Swim didn’t know much, because Ruler and Calamity Mary were Magical Girls long before Swim Swim became one.

What she did know was that Calamity Mary was a powerful opponent, and sooner or later, will have to be dealt with.

Just like Winterprison.

In fact, Calamity Mary and Winterprison have fought before. The clash of the two most powerful Magical Girls.

Swim Swim remembered the incident. Sister Nana walked in Calamity Mary's territory, and Calamity Mary nearly shot her to death. Winterprison defended Sister Nana, and all parties survived.

Winterprison and Sister Nana have a strong relationship. Almost every Magical Girl in the city knew that.

Not just because of what happened, but they even show it in the chats too, whether they realize it or not.

In a way, Swim Swim felt the same towards Ruler. She adored Ruler more than anything. She can't let her down now.

Winterprison and Calamity Mary fought each other. They are probably the strongest Magical Girls in the group. Yet, their match was a stalemate.

Winterprison will arrive here soon.

If Swim Swim can win against Winterprison, then Calamity Mary won't be a problem.

It seemed so simple, yet it wasn't as simple in reality. If Swim Swim wanted to win against Winterprison, then the conditions would have to be appropriate.

Firstly, the meeting place. The assigned meeting place was the temple grounds. The temple where Swim Swim is staying now.

There is some risk associated with this. Ruler never really revealed the exact location of their hiding spot, and now Swim Swim has revealed information to the outside.

If Swim Swim loses, then their home base is gone.

That was the risk.

However, the advantage is that this is their home base. Fighting here would give the advantage to Swim Swim, so she had to take the chance.

Swim Swim just had to make sure that Winterprison didn't realize it was a trap.

Sometimes she wished that she was better at making plans. That was always Ruler's strength. Swim Swim wasn't good with thinking and plans.

Still, this will have to do.

Swim Swim looked out the window of the temple.

Insects were making noise. Different varieties. Some come for the mating season, some come for the food, some come to eat the other insects.

And they all went silent.

They're here.

A creak at the door. Two Magical Girls have arrived. Sister Nana and Winterprison.

"Long time no see, Swim Swim," said Sister Nana.

Swim Swim was sitting at the throne. Far away from Sister Nana and Winterprison. She looked at the two carefully.

Sister Nana was in front, Winterprison close behind her.

Bad position.

Swim Swim stood up from the throne. She looked at the two Magical Girls.

Sister Nana with an expression of happiness and joy. Winterprison glared at her. Somehow, Winterprison knew something was off.

This had to be quick.

"Just recently, we had Snow White and Hardgore Alice agree to cooperate with us. Thank you for the generous donation of Magical Candies a few weeks ago, as well"

Swim Swim took a step closer to them. Winterprison stayed calm.

One more step. One more step. Swim Swim approached them slowly.

Finally, Winterprison moved in front of Sister Nana, as if to guard her.

Good position.

Swim Swim, with monotone eyes, merely stated.

“Go”

Sister Nana screamed. Winterprison was shocked. She turned her head around to see what was happening and…

…Sister Nana was screaming and pointing at…

…Sister Nana!?

There were two Sister Nanas. One was pointing at the other, the other one was just shocked.

The shocked one pushed away the pointing one and embraced Winterprison.

The sudden hug shocked Winterprison, who had no idea what to do, and then, before she realized it…

…The Sister Nana that hugged Winterprison had stabbed her in the chest with a dagger.

Weiss Winterprison had been stabbed with a dagger.

She was so confused. What was going on. There were two Sister Nanas. Was she delusional?

One was laughing. One was crying.

One was shocked. One was holding a dagger.

Then, the dagger wielding Sister Nana slowly began to morph and transform. Changing shape. The dagger as well.

Suddenly, that Sister Nana had become a small angel. The dagger had also become a small angel.

Two angelic twins. The twin Magical Girls. They were laughing and not even hiding their joy.

Everything makes sense now.

Winterprison laughed as well. Every laughter coughing up blood. She laughed because she let her guard down and acted stupidly. She laughed at the ridiculous situation and the clear trap this was.

But most of all, she also laughed at the fact that the enemy messed up.

Why did the angels reveal their disguises? If the angels kept the disguise up, Winterprison wouldn't be able to tell the difference, and would hesitate to attack Sister Nana, or… the fake Sister Nana.

The dagger had hit her heart. It was a fatal wound. The blood was pouring out. She found it hard to breathe.

There was only one word she could blurt out. She looked at Sister Nana, and said.

"Run!"

A large wall made out of the temple floor blocked Sister Nana's path to Winterprison. The last thing Winterprison saw of her was her crying face.

Now to deal with the angels.

Winterprison began to create a clay prison. Block their escape. The angels tried to fly away, but Winterprison created a wall blocking their path, stretching out to the ceiling of the temple.

1 side. 2 sides. 3 sides. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.

8 sided octagon wall. Finally, Winterprison made it close in, trapping the angels inside. The twins panicked, and they started crying. Winterprison didn't care. The cage was working. They're trapped. They can't run now.

Winterprison balled up her left fist, and with all her energy, she pierced through the prison she made herself.

She felt a gush of blood as her fist had pierced through one of the angels' body.

That's one down. There was another left. Winterprison struggled and began to remove her left hand. Her breathing was hard. The timing had to be perfect.

She prepared to launch another punch through the prison she made, but then…

…A hole suddenly appeared in her feet, throwing her off-balance.

How!?

Then, it happened.

Swish!

Winterprison saw her left hand flying.

It was cut off. She saw the culprit. With wide eyes, she saw her.

Swim Swim was holding some kind of halberd weapon, and she chopped off Winterprison's left hand.

There's no strength left in her. Sister Nana ran away. She's safe now. Winterprison prayed.

She remembered the time she combed Sister Nana's hair. Those were good memories.

The blood flow from both her chest and her hand was too much. She's losing consciousness.

She hoped that everything will be okay.

Finally, she let go, and it was over…

Minael had transformed into a dagger. Yunael had transformed into Sister Nana.

The plan was simple. Get close to Winterprison and stab her, then it should be alright. They already had a great way to sneak in.

The Invisibility Cloak. Nothing can detect them when they're wearing that.

It was a simple plan. It should be easy.

Winterprison was in position. Swim Swim had said the command.

“Go”

Stabbed. Straight to the heart. Minael could feel it. She was so happy that the plan had worked. Winterprison wasn’t so scary after all.

She saw her sister happy with her as they transformed back.

Then, it happened fast.

A wall. Winterprison hadn’t died yet. The only thoughts on Minael’s mind was…

…Escape!

She couldn’t fly up, there was a wall there. She grabbed her sister’s hand, but there was nowhere to go.

She was surrounded on all sides by walls closing in. Then, there was no escape. Only darkness.

Trapped.

Only with her sister. Holding her hand. Afraid. Scared.

Crash!

Her sister’s hand was gone.

There was only blood. She was gone.

Minael was saved by Tama, who created a whole in the cage that Winterprison had made.

Outside, she could see Winterprison’s body lying on the ground. Her eyes were dead. Her left hand was gone.

Minael’s senses started to come back to her. Then…

…She flew over to Tama and embraced her. Tears streamed down Minael’s face.

“Y-Yuna… Yuna is…”

“I know, I know… I’m so sorry”

“Y-Yuna…”

Swim Swim looked down at the battlefield. This was her fault. If Ruler had planned this, she’d have an escape plan. A backup.

Swim Swim couldn’t forgive herself. She can’t let anyone in her team suffer.

Alcohol. It had always been her panacea. Her means of escape from reality. Whenever negative thoughts pour into her head, alcohol was always the solution.

However, it’s meaningless now. Magical Girls can’t get drunk, so alcohol shouldn’t provide the same buzz it did before.

But old habits die hard, and she still feels at ease when drinking alcohol.

It wasn’t too long ago that her problems existed.

Stress. Money.

Her outlet was her daughter.

Beaten. Kicked. Disciplined.

There was pleasure in that. Because her daughter was weak. Her husband was weak as well.

No resources. Her husband left with her daughter.

Obviously, she needed to become stronger.

Self-proclaimed professional violence. The Yakuza.

A strong, self-important, beautiful, and wise person. Someone above everyone else. That was the moment that she felt powerful.

Look at me!

She thought to herself.

In the mirror, was a woman. About 39 years old. 40 this year. She smiled. She looked very tired.

She took out her Magical Phone, and shouted out.

“Calamity Miracle! Gunman Magical Girl!”

Her transformation was instant.

A holster on her left hip, sherrif badge, rich blonde hair reaching her waist, cowboy hat. A beautiful young face. The western-styled Magical Girl.

Gone was the 39 year old, and in her place…

“Calamity Mary is here!”

She posed in front of the mirror. It was vanity. She loved herself like this. With an evil grin, she twirled her gun.

She knew her goals, to become the strongest.

With a smirk, she took the 4-Dimensional Bag and carried it off with her.

The National Highway. It’s more known as “Highway X” as a local nickname. Mostly because the drivers there don’t really follow the speed limit. Occasionally, there would be accidents in the highway, so it’s earned its nickname that way.

In a hotel nearby, on the roof, was a cowboy Magical Girl.

If Ripple responded to her, then she should be here. It’s 10:40 PM now, and the meeting was scheduled at 11 PM. Nevertheless, if she didn’t come, then Calamity Mary would have to make her come.

Calamity Mary felt the wind in her face. She judged the direction of the wind itself. Then, with a smile, she pulled out her weapon from the 4-Dimensional Bag.

A Dragunov.

This was a Soviet Union era sniper rifle. Lightweight, but heavy recoil. Not that it mattered to a Magical Girl. She casually carried it and got into position, crouching down for a better shot.

Her magic had increased the power of the bullets fired by a Dragunov to extreme lengths. Now, it wasn't like a normal sniper bullet. Now, it was more like bullets that would come out of a tank.

She took aim, and fired.

A car exploded in the highway. Bright red, with an explosive mushroom cloud. Another exploded in front of it. Another one, and another one.

The highway burst in flames as people stopped to run away from the pile-up and explosions. People running, screaming for their lives.

How beautiful.

Calamity Mary saw a man exiting his car. She knew this might be boring, but she gave it a shot anyway.

After all, sniper rifles were supposed to be anti-personell weapons, meant to kill people, nor cars.

She fired at the man, and instantly, his entire upper body exploded. Blood showered the people nearby. The only thing standing were the bottom of his knees.

Weak explosion. Not interesting. Cars were better.

Still, she didn't just want to create mindless chaos. This was supposed to be a lure. For days, Ripple and Top Speed would avoid Calamity Mary.

Top Speed's broomstick was impossible to match. No matter how fast Calamity Mary would increase her powers for her guns, it wouldn't be able to match Top Speed's broomstick speed.

They always escaped, but now they have to come.

People dying, asking for help. Perfect for a Magical Girl. Ripple will come, and Calamity Mary is going to kill her.

Besides, if nothing else, Ripple may just come for the abundance of Magical Candies she'll receive, if she's the greedy type.

Either way, Calamity Mary was fixated on Ripple the moment they first met. While Top Speed bowed down to Calamity Mary, Ripple kept her head up.

Disrespectful.

Calamity Mary couldn't forgive those people who didn't fear her. She worked hard to be feared, and she damn well will get it.

Ripple will know fear.

CHAPTER 6:
MAGICAL CANNON GIRL

On the Magical Phone was an image of the National Highway in flames.

"This is terrible… We have to go help!"

"I'll come with you, Snow White"

"Y-You will!? Okay, let's go together!"

On the Magical Phone was an image of the National Highway in flames.

"W-Whaaat!? What's *this*!? We have to do something!"

"Leave the rescuing for the other Magical Girls."

"E-Eh!? But…"

“We attack the Magical Girl that arrives. Tama, Minael, get ready. We leave soon”

“Eh!? Eh!? *Eh!?*”

On the Magical Phone was an image of the National Highway in flames.

“Huh? You’re not coming, Master? I thought it’d be fun if you come, Pon!”

“I don’t think so. I feel like there’s no fun to be had there”

“Why so gloomy all of a sudden?”

“I’m not. Tell me, is Winterprison really dead? I’d like to find out who killed her and how”

“Isn’t that something we should decide for the future, Pon?”

“This is something I’d rather not get anxious about for long”

The sniper near the National Highway is still shooting. However, no longer was she shooting at the highway below her. What she was trying to shoot instead was a fast speeding broomstick.

Top Speed could hear Calamity Mary shouting something, but it just passes through her as she skillfully dodges each sniper bullet.

“Slow down, little girl!”

Calamity Mary throws away her sniper rifle and unholsters her pistol. She fired wildly at the speeding broomstick, but Top Speed was just too fast for her.

From the shadows of the hotel, Ripple had planned to attack Calamity Mary. She was well-hidden. This should be a perfect chance.

As Ripple rushed out, Calamity Mary instinctively turned around and fired a bullet at Ripple’s direction.

Ripple’s reaction was instantaneous, unsheathing her Katana and deflecting the bullet.

Behind Calamity Mary was the raging inferno in the National Highway. The flames made the shadows lengthier, and shaded Calamity Mary's eyes, and highlighted her insane white grin.

Ripple remembered the fear she felt when she deflected a bullet and saw the muzzle of Calamity Mary's gun.

That fear turned to anger.

She ran forward at Calamity Mary, using all her power as a Magical Girl. She had never run so fast in her life.

The barrage of bullets became faster. Calamity Mary unholstered another gun. Dual wielding. Increased fire rate.

Impossible to dodge. Ripple had to react fast enough to deflect all the bullets coming at her.

Like a whirlwind, Ripple trusted her instincts. Dived, slid, rolled, deflected, dodged. She circled around Calamity Mary and dashed straight to her. Zig-zagging, changing directions, throwing Calamity Mary off her mark.

Clang!

A clash of steel.

Ripple had dashed towards Calamity Mary and swung her Katana, but it hit something.

Then she saw it. A rifle, with a bayonet attached to it.

"Not so easy, little girl!" Calamity Mary said as she grinned.

With one hand on the rifle, Calamity Mary used her other hand to pull out a Tokarev 9mm pistol and rapidly fired at Ripple.

Skillfully, Ripple jumped up, flipped, and tried to do a downswing with her Katana.

All her strikes were being blocked by that bayonet.

Normally, Ripple's Katana would be able to cut even concrete, but this bayonet had been strengthened by Calamity Mary's Magical Skill.

Ripple screamed like a mad animal.

She focused her entire body on attack. Rapid slices faster than the eye can see. It was blocked by Calamity Mary.

She changed to rapid thrusts. It was also blocked by Calamity Mary.

She threw her Shurikens. Calamity Mary shot them down easily.

Pain in her face. Calamity Mary had countered by hitting Ripple with the butt of Calamity Mary's rifle.

Momentary distraction.

Ripple quickly rolled backwards on instinct. Sure enough, bullets were flying above her.

Ripple's nose was bleeding. The pain was a burning sensation. She managed to give some distance away from her opponent. 10 meters.

Ripple ran to the right. She ran as fast as she could. Bullets rapidly firing at her, and…

…She stopped.

She sensed a feeling in her right leg. The concrete… It wasn't concrete.

Ripple felt a chill down her spine.

Fear.

She had stepped on a mine.

"Hahahahahaha!!! Aaaahahahaha!"

Calamity Mary laughed maniacally.

"I never thought you'd sense it! Guess you can't move, little girl. Now do you understand how pathetically outmatched you are!?"

Normally, mines wouldn't even make a scratch on Ripple.

But she had a feeling that these mines were enhanced by Calamity Mary. There's no way that it won't be a fatal wound.

"Never mess with Calamity Mary"

Calamity Mary rammed her hand into her 4-Dimensional Bag

"Do not anger Calamity Mary"

She pulled out 8 hand grenades

"You will bow down to Calamity Mary"

She pulled the pin on each of those grenades and tossed them at Ripple's feet.

Laughing, Calamity Mary jumped off the roof of the hotel. For a Magical Girl, a fall like that wouldn't even be deadly.

Ripple couldn't move.

Ripple couldn't stay.

Ripple had no choice. Was she going to die here?

Pain in her ribs. Wind blown out of her lungs. The breeze of the air smacking her face. A fiery explosion behind her. Ripple was…

…in the air?

"You *reckless little brat*!"

A voice that yelled out to Ripple. In front of her was a Magical Girl sitting on a broomstick. Ah, Ripple had been saved.

But behind her was a large explosion. Fiery red. It was like a explosion straight out of some action movie.

It blew the entire roof and about 3 floors below it.

This was the power of Calamity Mary's magic.

Ripple prayed that there were no guests in that floor. Ripple knew that it wouldn't be that easy.

"What were you thinking!? I told you to be careful and you ended up in a life or death situation!"

"I know the risks! I know that I could've died! I'm okay with that as long as she's stopped!"

"That doesn't make any sense! If you died then she *wouldn't* be stopped, don't you get that!?"

"People were dying! I know I can't save the world but I can't just let these people die without trying!"

"There's saving people's lives and charging in recklessly. You didn't even know how strong she was"

"What was I *supposed* to do, then, huh!? I'm not a perfect Magical Girl! I'm *not* the ideal Magical Girl, okay! But I'm doing the best I can!"

Ripple's grip tightened on Top Speed's waist.

Anger.

Ever since she was young, Ripple had been driven by anger. When she saw Calamity Mary, they were like oil and water.

Calamity Mary would step on others because she felt like it. That made Ripple angry.

Sometimes Ripple wished that she wasn't so easily pissed off, but it's too late to change that now.

Top Speed let out a deep sigh.

"Y'know, this is the first time you've spoken so openly about yourself to me," she said while smiling.

Top Speed continued,

“You’re right. You’re not an ideal Magical Girl. None of us are. We do what we can. So if we wanna save everyone, we gotta be a little smarter okay?”

Top Speed looked behind her. Ripple buried her head on Top Speed’s back.

Top Speed smiled, and accelerated her broomstick further to the night sky.

Magical Girls are known to have good eyesight.

The hotel had been ruined. The roof was burning. There was a hole in the top 3 floors. Exposed.

Bodies were burning inside the hotel. Standing amidst the chaos was a cowboy Magical Girl.

She held her sniper rifle close. Magical Girls have really good eyesight. Even though Top Speed and Ripple were but a tiny dot, she could still see them clear as day.

Steady… aim… fire!

Top Speed sensed it. She sensed danger. With a gut feeling.

“Hold on!”

She swerved her broomstick to the right, and felt the bullet of the sniper fly nearby. Another shot, dodge it. Another.

“Looks like she’s not done”

“Then let’s kick her ass”

Top Speed couldn’t argue with that. Calamity Mary was going to be trouble, and if they leave her here, she’d just murder more people.

Hopefully with Top Speed to join Ripple, she won’t make stupid mistakes.

This better work.

Top Speed turned a full 180 degrees and aimed towards Calamity Mary.

Top Speed was a Magical Girl, so her eyesight was just as good as Calamity Mary. Aiming at the gunman, she accelerated her broomstick to ultrasonic speed.

Straight through, straight through.

Calamity Mary was in their path. No turning back.

“Brace for impact, Ripple!”

The broomstick smashed through in a straight line, bursting through the rubble and debris in the hotel, and continued to fly straight forward.

Concrete walls and buildings were nothing as the broomstick continued to pierce through all the obstacles, with a large boom accompanying every single time they crashed through.

Top Speed hit the brakes.

She estimated a 10 km distance from the hotel. They had stopped near some mountains near the outskirts of the district.

“You okay, Ripple?”

“I’m… alive, so yeah”

“Right! Whoo, that was a real rush. Alright, let’s get her!”

Calamity Mary had narrowly avoided the charge of the broomstick. However, her sniper rifle was gone. It must’ve somehow got blown away by the charge.

She pulled out another rifle from the 4-Dimensional Bag.

The barrel was as long as a rifle, about 1 meter, now 3, now 5.

Using her Magical Skill, she’s making the barrel longer.

She had a maniacal laugh, and fired straight at the oncoming *Rapid Swallow* nearly 10 km away.

Ripple felt the sensation, the same feeling she had when she stepped on the mine. She couldn't tell why, but she knew that if Top Speed continued to push forward, she would die.

"Stop!"

Ripple pulled Top Speed's pointed hat down, and Top Speed became unbalanced. She accidentally moved the handles of the broomstick to the right, and the broomstick swerved from its original course.

Losing control, Top Speed instinctively jolted the handles to swerve left.

The broomstick zig-zagged and tumbled up and down. The resulting force felt like a roller coaster ride, and where they originally aimed for Calamity Mary, they missed entirely.

Instead, the broomstick came crashing on the roof of a nearby building, knocking the two Magical Girls off.

After crashing on the roof, Ripple stood up first, followed by Top Speed groaning.

"Wha… What was that all about!?"

Top Speed yelled at Ripple, still slightly dazed from the crash.

"Didn't you see it? Look at your broom!"

Top Speed glanced at the smoking wreck of *Rapid Swallow*.

On the windshield of the broom/motorcycle hybrid was some bullet marks, and on the side were grazes.

The broomstick itself was fine, but only because the shots scratched its surface.

Top Speed was furious.

"Argh, that *asshole*! C'mon, Ripple, let's go!"

"That's not gonna work"

"My broomstick still works. No bullets are gonna hurt it"

“Those almost did. If that was a direct hit we would’ve died”

Top Speed slowed down a bit. She was getting a bit short tempered.

“What the hell was she using? I thought she was firing a sniper rifle!”

“Not a sniper rifle. She can alter any weapon. These bullets were fired rapidly”

The two Magical Girls considered their plan. *Rapid Swallow* was damaged, but not broken, and could certainly still have a lot of speed to boot.

“So how are we gonna play this, Ripple?”

Ripple tried surprise attacks. It didn’t work.

Top Speed used a full frontal attack. It didn’t work.

Ripple pondered for a moment. Thinking the best course of action. Calamity Mary is crazy, but she’s smart. If they want to beat her, they’ll have to outsmart her.

“…I’ve got a plan”

Calamity Mary’s Magical Skill was to enhance weapons. She can’t make new weapons out of nothing. She had to prepare them beforehand.

Dragunov, Tokarev, AK, KSVK. All Russian. All Soviet Union made. These were good weapons, but Calamity Mary would prefer US-based weapons. She was, after all, a cowboy.

But beggars can’t be choosers. With her powers, it didn’t matter which weapon she chose, only the type.

She was wondering where those two would attack next.

Top Speed prefers the head-on assault, in which case she can stop her with her KSVK anti-personell rifle.

Ripple prefers sneak attacks. She would need to prepare for that as well.

Which one would they use next?

Calamity Mary had already set up the hotel as her last stand. She should be safe so long as she stays on the hotel roof.

If they attack from the front, or the right, or the left, then Calamity Mary will be able to prevent that with her assault rifle.

An attack from the bottom is secure as well.

Set up in a room below her in a stun grenade with a piano tied to a wire on the roof. Enhanced by Calamity Mary, it would crush them if they entered.

Top Speed would be easy to find. She always rides that broomstick. Ripple is the hard one.

Ripple wouldn't be able to attack from the sky, since she had no flying abilities. If she had to attack from the top, she'd need to ride Top Speed's broom.

Either way, that's no longer a sneak attack.

Guard the front for Top Speed, let Ripple try to get through Calamity Mary's defenses. Unbreakable.

Calamity Mary waited.

She saw movement inside a nearby office building. Glass panels. Hard to see what was inside of it. Shadows moving ahead.

Crash

One of the glass panels came loose.

Silhouette of a broomstick behind the loose glass panel.

Were they trying to use the panel as a shield? They should know that it's impossible for a simple panel to withstand bullets from Calamity Mary's guns.

Again, Calamity Mary waited.

Quiet. The sound was too quiet. There was no sound.

Then, she saw a silhouette again behind the office building.

Crash!

The glass panel went straight for her.

A direct attack!? That's foolish.

Calamity Mary fired rapidly. The blasts were explosions. They shredded the incoming glass panel.

If that was supposed to be a shield, it was like shielding yourself from a gunshot with a piece of paper.

Calamity Mary ceased fire.

She smiled, grinned evilly, and licked her lips. Her lust for murder have been satisfied. The dust has settled, and the thrown glass panel was shattered into millions of pieces.

But…

…There was no body?

Even if their bodies exploded, there should've been a broomstick. Top Speed's. Did they not charge at her? What was going on?

Calamity Mary looked around.

Left, right, bottom, top…

…That's strange.

There were way too many stars twinkling in the night sky. It's a good night out, but that's a lot of stars.

The stars became smaller, and seem to be coming…

…straight for her.

It's then that she realized, those weren't stars.

…They were glass shards.

She saw the building ahead. On the roof. Two Magical Girls, looking down at her.

You're fucking with me!?

Calamity Mary tried to unholster her pistol.

1 shot, 2 shots, 3 shots, 4 shots.

There were too many shards.

A shard pierced her shoulder. Another pierced her neck. Another pierced her in the forehead.

Hundreds continued to pour down, all aiming for her.

The last thing she thought of before she died was,

Don't you dare look down on me

Ripple was exhausted.

She had tested before that her Magical Skill wasn't limited to only Shuriken, but anything she thrown. So, if she threw a gigantic glass panel at Calamity Mary, surely it would still chase after her.

But the gamble had to be perfect.

It was certainly a miracle that it happened the way it did. The shattered glass pieces continued to chase their targets even after Calamity Mary shot them down, as she hadn't destroyed them completely.

Slowly, Calamity Mary's corpse transformed back to her normal human form. When Ripple confirmed that Calamity Mary had finally died, she let out a cough of blood.

She had done it, and now she was tired.

Top Speed was beside her, gasping at Ripple's wounds.

Pain shot through Ripple's body. She had been holding it in. Ripple collapsed on the ground, arms and legs stretched out, face looking at the sky. She breathed heavily.

Top Speed came over to Ripple's side, looking towards her apprentice's face.

"Hey, hey! You're okay!"

Ripple was tired. Her body had been pushed to the limit.

Top Speed reassured her.

"Nice work, partner!"

Top Speed gave a warm smile at Ripple.

Ripple smiled back. They did it. They won.

"C'mon, I'll help you up"

Top Speed extended a hand towards Ripple. Ripple took the hand.

Top Speed's eyes widened. Suddenly, She fell on top of Ripple.

A figure had appeared behind Top Speed. Swimsuit. Headphones. A large halberd ready to swing.

Ripple reacted. Grabbing Top Speed, she rolled out of the way.

The halberd swung down and missed them. Ripple unsheathed her Katana. The halberd swung again, but it was parried by Ripple.

The halberd user was clumsy. She swung slow. Ripple was faster. The only way is to disarm her.

Ripple slashed her Katana towards the wrists of the halberd user. She was expecting some resistance when it would've slashed her, but instead, it passed through…

…Like passing through liquid.

No scar marks. No wounds on the girl.

The halberd swung again. Ripple jumped back. The halberd was stuck in the ground. Now's her chance.

Ripple thrusted her Katana towards the girl's heart. It connected and stabbed… but nothing…

It clearly went inside the girl, but for some reason, it felt like Ripple had hit water.

The girl kicked Ripple away, and pulled out Ripple's Katana. She looked at it and threw it back at Ripple.

The swimsuit girl retreated.

Her body slowly turned to liquid from her feet up. As it poured into the roof, she disappeared.

…Was that a Magical Skill…?

Ripple noticed the weight on her shoulders. She put down Top Speed on the roof of the building, but…

…The girl she put down didn't have a witch hat or a coat.

It looked like Top Speed but…

…She looked 19. Hair color was similar. Her eyes were closed. It looked as if she's sleeping serenely.

Is this… Top Speed's human form.

But if she reverted to human, that could only mean…

…No

The human girl was wearing a maternity dress. Her stomach was slightly larger than what her build would suggest.

…Pregnant.

'I'm gonna stay alive for at least 6 more months. Then I can die in peace'

The words echoed through Ripple's head.

This can't be happening. Not now. Not after all of this.

"…Why? …Why!? Why!? WHY!?"

Ripple slammed the ground, angry, sad, crying on Top Speed's body.

Ripple had lost her one true friend.

When Snow White saw the angelic Magical Girl swoop down, she was relieved.

They had come to help out a crisis in the National Highway. Friend or foe, it didn't matter.

For once, everyone was a Magical Girl again, helping people in trouble.

So many people died, but the ones that could still be saved had to be saved.

A few weeks ago, the Peaky Angels attacked Snow White and La Pucelle, wanting to steal their candy, but now, Snow White had forgiven them for that, and only wished for a new beginning.

Snow White wanted to greet the angel, but her hand was held by something tight.

Hardgore Alice, softly shaking her head, warning Snow White not to get close.

"They've already declared war on us," she said with a monotone expression.

The angelic Magical Girl had an angry face when she noticed Snow White.

Eyebrows curled. Lips straight. Skin pale.

Hardgore Alice threw her stuffed bunny to the ground. She casually picked up a road sign from behind her and stepped near Snow White, as if daring the angel to come near her.

The Magical Girl angel growled.

Snow White didn't like this. They were supposed to help people, and there's tension between the Magical Girls.

Snow White simply continued to help out the people in the rubble, the people that are injured.

The explosions killed a lot, but there are still people in danger.

Her Magical Skill, '*The ability to hear the voices of people in trouble*', is very useful at this time.

She could hear their screams, moans, and wails of pain. The voices got louder and louder. She followed them to find people that wouldn't have been found otherwise.

Then, within the mix of voices, she could hear something far away.

10 meters from Snow White. Behind her. No one should've been hurt there, but Snow White decided to investigate anyways. If there are people in trouble, there are people in trouble.

She heard the voice carefully.

'Swim-Chan's attacking another Magical Girl'

'I should help her out!'

'But Swim-Chan said not to!'

'If she wants to win, she can't do it alone!'

Voices, but no one there. Snow White was certain there were voices.

"Who's there!?"

'Eh!? Can she see me!? Oh no… How can she see me!?'

"Are you a Magical Girl?"

The voices stopped.

"Sorry, it looks like I found you!" said Snow White cheerfully.

Suddenly, out of thin air, a dog-eared Magical Girl appeared, sobbing sadly.

"Aaah! How did you see me!? I was supposed to be here as a distraction, but it doesn't work if you can see me Nyaa! I'm so stupid! Idiot! Stupid dog! Useless!"

The Angel Magical Girl screamed at the dog-eared Magical Girl.

“Argh! If you can’t handle this thing then give it to me!”

She zipped past Snow White and took what seemed like a cloak away from the dog-eared Magical Girl

Then the Angel Magical Girl disappeared, leaving the dog-eared Magical Girl in tears on her knees.

“Waaaaaaaaah!”

Snow White saw the scene with confusion. What’s going on here?

Quickly, the dog eared Magical Girl scratched the concrete below her, and a hole started to form. She jumped inside, presumably to escape.

Hardgore Alice walked over to Snow White, still holding the road sign she planned to use as a weapon of self defense.

The angel was gone. The dog-eared Magical Girl was gone. There are still people in danger.

“Come on. Let’s go save some lives”

“Understood”

Hardgore Alice threw away the road sign and looked for her stuffed bunny. She found it lying on the ground. She held on to it with her right hand and followed Snow White.

The television screen showed images of the National Highway burning. People were dying, but Sister Nana couldn’t move.

She had lost everything.

She looked at a picture of her and Winterprison, hung to a board at the wall.

Weiss Winterprison…

Shizuku…

Every day Shizuku would comb her hair, or cook her food, or clean up any mess she made, even help her in college.

She would do anything for Sister Nana. Nana Habutae.

Perhaps Nana took it for granted, but she always loved Shizuku.

She loved her, and wanted to be with her, but she was gone now.

Shizuku's words echoed in Nana's head.

'*You're looking cute today*'.

A tear fell down Nana's cheek. This was her fault.

Nana was the one that had gone to all these Magical Girls. Nana was the one that endangered Shizuku. If only she'd just remain passive.

Nana killed Shizuku.

She held onto Shizuku's scarf. The scarf she wore as Winterprison. This scarf was knitted by Nana herself.

Purity.

It's said that princesses wait for their eventual prince to save them. Shizuku was Nana's prince.

Nana wanted to repay her debt by saving Winterprison, as a hero.

Nana could never be a hero anymore.

She climbed on her chair and stood up. Scarf at her hand.

Purity.

She looked at the television screen. Snow White and Hardgore Alice should be helping these people now. They worked together. Her work was not in vain.

She could be happy, and see Shizuku again.

She hung the scarf, and tied a noose around her neck.

Purity.

She wondered if Winterprison could see her. If Shizuku could see her now. Maybe she'd disapprove?

Her sense of loss was far greater than anything. There is nothing left here.

Snow White and Hardgore Alice, they will finish what she started.

She can leave in peace.

MAGICAL GIRL WEEKEND CHAT PART 5

Fav: Er… Well…

Fav: This week was rather… eventful, Pon!

Fav: A lot more Magical Girls were eliminated than expected, Pon!

Fav: The following Magical Girls have sadly perished and been eliminated

Fav: Weiss Winterprison

Fav: Yunael

Fav: Calamity Mary

Fav: Top Speed

Fav: Sister Nana

Fav: That's 5 people, Pon!

Fav: The remaining Magical Girls are

Fav: Swim Swim

Fav: Snow White

Fav: Tama

Fav: Hardgore Alice

Fav: Minael

Fav: The Forest Musician, Clamberry

Fav: Ripple

Fav: 7 people, Pon!

Fav: Ah! Finally! We originally had planned to reduce the number of Magical Girls to 8, Pon!

Fav: Unfortunately, there’s been a change of plans

Fav: The constant use of the items given to you have put more strain on magical energy

Fav: A grave miscalculation on my part, Pon!

Fav: So, in order to compensate, we’ll have to squeeze out a little longer

Fav: We’ll keep the game going until only 4 Magical Girls are left, Pon!

Fav: Good luck everyone!

Fav: Well, see you next time, Pon!

CHAPTER 7:
CLAMBERY’S SECRET

Calamity Mary attacked the National Highway. It was a high profile attack that nobody could have missed. In fact, even if you did miss it, the news was all over television for the whole day. They're calling it a terrorist attack. Still trying to make the logical assumption, and not admitting the fact that there could be a Magical Girl that existed.

The number of weapons found in the crime scene seemed to support the fact that this was a group of terrorists that launched the attack at the National Highway. However, people are smarter than what the news may think.

There are already rumors and talks that this was caused by a Magical Girl. This is even more supported by the fact that their sightings have increased in the past few days.

Some even saw the lone sniper allegedly at the roof. Some say the Magical Girl terrorist was paid for, or maybe worked for a terrorist organization. Most of these rumors were silenced.

"Argh, it's so early in the morning, and I'm tired, Pon!"

A weak voice cries out lazily.

The black and white creature had a lazy and sleepy look in its eyes, and its wings weren't flapping as energetically as it was before.

"At least it's going well. I thought that if we added the items we could make the excuse that we'll reduce them to 4 Magical Girls and it worked, Pon!"

The Magical Girls have been severely reduced. In just one day, 5 were killed.

Yunael, Calamity Mary, Top Speed, Sister Nana, and Weiss Winterprison.

Winterprison. Clamberry felt a tinge of rage and regret that she died. Now they'll never be able to have a rematch.

"But, uh… well, I think it's safe to say that most of the Magical Girls probably hate me by now. What a pain, Pon!"

“Certainly is, isn’t it?”

“I don’t know if they’ll continue to listen to me at this rate though, Pon!”

“You’re going to have to keep being a pain for them. It’s a good distraction for me. I’ve still got plans that I have to put in motion”

During the mid-game stage, Winterprison was the opponent to beat. She was the strongest out of all of them.

This wasn’t a development that Clamberry predicted. With Winterprison dead, the end-game has changed. More than that, Winterprison had been killed. Someone was more superior than her.

Now, the only true opponents were between Swim Swim and Ripple.

Hardgore Alice might be fun to play around with as well, but might not be the opponent Clamberry’s looking for.

“Decisions, decisions…”

The *Land of Magic* had always conducted selections for new blood. Out of all the candidates, they eventually select one talented individual.

The facilitators of the screening tests were known as Masters. They are officials sent from the *Land of Magic*, to act as advisors to the local human populace.

They ensure the tests proceed whilst also giving advice.

Being a Master comes with many benefits. For example, being given a special Magical Phone, an Administrator-level Magical Phone.

This is quite different from normal Magical Phones, as it contains various non-traditional applications not found in normal Magical Phones. For example, Fav, although has the ability to go to any Magical Phone, resides within the Administrator’s phone.

“Send in the report, would you?”

“Yeah, yeah”

It's important to send constant reports back to the *Land of Magic*. That way they won't get suspicious. After all, this is a Human Resources kind of job.

The slaughter of children killing each other's idyllic peaceful lives, decorated with the red running rivers of blood would have been disguised as a simple test.

The *Land of Magic* was seeking out talent. The ones that died weren't good enough to pass.

We should try to interfere as little as possible in the other world.

What a foolish ideal.

The act itself is foolish. Seeking out talent in another world.

Once, a long time ago, something similar happened. The *Land of Magic* had conducted one of their screening tests.

There were multiple candidates, however, one of them had summoned something out of this world.

She had summoned a demon. A creature from another plane of existence.

Of course, the demon was killed. However, the cost that had to be paid was great.

Clamberry was the only survivor.

12 Magical Girls died that day. They had all been ripped apart, torn to shreds, killed by the summoned creature.

Clamberry remembered every fatality.

12 Magical Girls. All of them were her classmates.

One was melted. One was crushed. One was ripped apart. One was burnt.

Clamberry and the rest… They were only 9 years old. Needless to say, the shock had changed her.

Because in that fight with the creature, she felt something in her brain.

She felt joy.

There was pleasure in violence. The catharsis of defeating your opponent brutally. Her senses and abilities pushed to the limit. Her magical abilities and skills tested. A life or death situation.

She had defeated a mighty demon. She had saved everyone. She had become a hero, and killed a powerful enemy.

Even after killing the demon, Clamberry wanted more. She wanted the feeling of joy.

She wanted to see blood as it fell down her cheeks.

She needed to be challenged again.

Then, she saw in one of the corpses, the Administrator's Magical Phone. The Master of that cycle had been killed by the demon. Its advisor popped out and told her,

"You'll be able to do this forever, Pon!"

And she smiled.

Truly a surprise then, when Clamberry realized that the demon summoning was simply an accident.

The actual selection process, in comparison, was very…

…tame.

Dull.

Irritating.

Eliminated candidates would just smile embarrassingly.

The winner gets congratulations from everyone.

How utterly boring.

There was something missing. Something that would truly determine who was worthy.

Kill or be Killed.

That is the proper way to select a talented individual.

Fav certainly agreed. He also thought the original selection process was boring. “That’s why you should become a Master, Pon!” he told her.

Finally, she was. Now that she was a Master, she can run the selection process however way she wanted.

Unless the *Land of Magic* finds out the details, which they won’t, Clamberry is free to do what she wishes.

Enjoying the show. Enjoying the spectacle.

Swim Swim was deep in thought.

There are 7 Magical Girls. They have passed the required limit of 8. However, a new limit has been set. Now there must be 4 Magical Girls.

In order for Swim Swim and her comrades to survive, she needs to eliminate at least 3 other Magical Girls.

Tama and Minael had an encounter with Snow White and Hardgore Alice earlier. Tama had returned to the temple, but Minael hadn’t. She also took the cloak.

The cloak. Somehow it was ineffective against those two, or at least one of them.

They say you can’t detect anyone underneath the cloak using any means. Even their scent and sound should disappear.

Therefore, there must be some kind of Magical Skill that either Snow White or Hardgore Alice is using to detect the presence of Magical Girls.

That’s bad.

The Invisibility Cloak would practically be useless. Swim Swim’s water form would be useless as well.

Tama can't ambush from underground, because they'd find out. Minael couldn't disguise herself, because their magic could find out.

No advantages.

They would have to fight them fair and square if they wanted to fight.

However, no fight was ever won fairly. In a real battle, every advantage must be taken. No such thing as cheating.

Even Ruler thought that way.

This wasn't a matter of honor or anything like it. It was a matter of life or death. If they wanted to fight Snow White and Hardgore Alice, it would probably be suicidal unless they understand their full abilities.

Swim Swim had decided that Snow White and probably Hardgore Alice should be avoided for the time being.

How about Ripple?

Top Speed was a lucky kill. An attack of opportunity, but Ripple was near impossible to hit.

Even just looking at the battle between Ripple and Calamity Mary, one thing is clear.

Ripple's reflexes, her agility, her speed.

There is a huge gap between Swim Swim and Ripple.

Their duel had ended with a stalemate. Swim Swim's weapon was far too heavy and clumsy, and Ripple's sword was a deadly weapon by itself.

Swim Swim had a feeling that if she engaged Ripple in a 3 on 1 battle, Tama and Minael would die immediately. The only way to win is to initiate a surprise attack.

If they lose, the damage will be enormous. Tama and Minael can't die. Swim Swim won't let that happen.

So Ripple is an opponent for Swim Swim alone to fight.

The final Magical Girl…

…The Forest Musician, Clamberry.

No information at all.

Not only that, Clamberry had survived this long, without revealing anything. No Magical Girls have discovered anything about Clamberry. As far as Swim Swim knows, Clamberry hasn't made contact with any of them.

As befitting of her title, The Forest Musician.

Snow White is too friendly for her own good. She would be an easier person to fight compared to Ripple, but…

…There's too many choices.

She didn't want to have to use it, but perhaps the Healing Medicine would finally come in handy.

However, there's a limited number of them, to be shared by all 3.

Should Swim Swim use it for fighting Ripple… or Clamberry?

Tama was sitting at the floor, looking downhearted. Minael still hasn't returned, and without Yunael, it's been pretty quiet.

Suddenly the door burst open.

Minael had returned. She had a very rough disgruntled face. Enraged. She constantly had that face ever since Yunael was killed by Winterprison.

Tama was scared. Swim Swim acknowledged it. She understood Minael's pain.

Minael glanced at the rubble where her sister had died. She let out a tear. She went over to Swim Swim and declared,

"I've found our next target… She dies tomorrow…"

A fishing goods store, with the lights turned off so late at night. You could barely see anything from the windows.

There aren't any pedestrians nearby as well.

Behind the shop, are some stone steps. Long amounts of stone steps. Snow White had been staring at the pebbles lying at the stone steps for a while now.

The accident in the National Highway was no accident.

Holes the size of explosions. The weapons. The people that blew up.

She didn't know the details, but Snow White knew that was a Magical Girl's doing.

During the whole chaos, Snow White had been helping people. She used her strength to lift cars and help pry open jammed doors and rubble.

She had used her ability to fly to carry injured people to ambulances, using her speed to make sure they can still make it.

It's getting harder to do the job of Magical Girls.

She was disappointed in the others. The others who would rather fight rather than help people.

Those Magical Girls who would hurt and kill whoever's in the lead for this competition.

The killings didn't stop either. Not even after she thought it would end.

'*We're reducing it to 4 Magical Girls, Pon!*'

She had cursed Fav at the time. She left. Her emotions a mix of fear and anger. Snow White had nothing left.

She had nothing left at all.

All she had was fatigue and weakness.

Magical Girls should think about helping people in trouble. Snow White has certainly been using her abilities to do so.

The other Magical Girls were insane.

It's so funny that it hurts.

The good people died.

La Pucelle had comforted Snow White. He had provided a sense of calm in this chaotic mess. Now he's gone.

Sister Nana and Winterprison were a source of wisdom. They promised to ride out this catastrophe. Now they're gone.

Was she in some cruel universal joke? Was she in some battle manga? She was expecting the funny moments to come now?

Why was she even here? Snow White wished that instead of this fate, she could be in some kind of romantic comedy instead. That would be nice. Yes, that would be nice.

Now she had nothing.

"I don't wanna do anything anymore"

She said it out loud.

From the bottom of her heart.

Snow White was tired.

She had tried to smile every day, and perform her duties as a Magical Girl. She tried. She tried to hold on. She can't do this anymore.

"I'm done with this. I don't have to do anything…"

"No"

A reply came from behind her.

"What do you expect me to do? There's *nothing* I can do to stop this"

"No"

“I never wanted this”

“It doesn’t matter”

“*Listen* to me!!!”

“No”

Snow White kicked a nearby large rubble, and it flew far away from where she was, bouncing off a wall and landing on its side.

“I don’t wanna do anything anymore!”

Snow White grabbed her head and sat down, crying.

The source of the voice came besides her. Hardgore Alice sat nearby.

Her face didn’t change. She still had dull eyes and a pale complexion, but her face was that of worry and concern.

Snow White wasn’t angry at Hardgore Alice. She was angry at herself.

“There are no more Magical Girls in this city. They’re all just killers”

“There are still Magical Girls”

“No… there aren’t”

“Yes, there are”

“*No*, there *aren’t*!”

“Not all of them have died yet”

Snow White snapped. She grabbed Hardgore Alice by her shoulders and pulled her close.

“*You* listen to me! La Pucelle is dead! Sister Nana and Winterprison are dead! Okay!? Everyone! Is! Dead! They’re not coming back! They’re *gone*!”

She pushed her away. Hardgore Alice lost her balance and fell, eyes still on Snow White.

Snow White rose up, removed the Lucky Rabbit's Foot from her pocket, and threw it near Hardgore Alice.

Snow White walked away. Hardgore Alice picked up the Rabbit's Foot and followed her.

Snow White turned around.

"Don't follow me!"

She said as she walked away into the night. Hardgore Alice stood there alone.

Ako Hatoda woke up in the morning sunshine. The sound of the birds had made her wake early. Still sleepy, she stretched out her arms and reached for her table.

The Lucky Rabbit's Foot was still there.

Ako got out of her bed. Time for breakfast. Her aunt had left for work, and her uncle was asleep since he had the night shift yesterday.

Her aunt was nice enough to prepare breakfast already.

Eggs, yummy. Some vegetables on the side too, healthy.

As she ate, she continued to remember last night.

Snow White had thrown the Rabbit's Foot at her. Then, she left. I guess it can't be helped for now. Ako had to keep the Foot safe.

Morning shower, then a change of clothes. Ako looked at the mirror. Her face was tired. She didn't know if it was from what happened at the highway or if it's just how she usually looks.

She changed into her school uniform. After the accident last night, there's a lot of people that were scared. However, the day proceeds as normal.

At school, the usual drone of students surrounds her. At school, nobody even glanced or looked at her.

Snow White had been broken that night. Ako knew how that felt. She didn't judge Snow White. Snow White was feeling hopeless that night.

Ako had to be careful, though. As a human, a slash on the neck or a stab to her stomach could easily kill her.

She had to ignore any contacts from Fav. She couldn't risk anyone finding out. She kept the Rabbit's Foot close, hopefully getting the luck it gave.

She wondered how she might be able to find Snow White that night. Hopefully she could find her again.

Then she heard her name being called.

"Hardgore Alice"

Ako looked up instinctively.

She realized her mistake.

The voice came from someone. A girl, in a raincoat. She was taller than the other kids at her school. Definitely not a Middle School girl. Who…

The raincoat girl approached Ako.

Ako could see that beneath the raincoat… was long hair, and…

…a swimsuit.

The raincoat girl had the eyes that Ako's father had.

The eyes of a killer.

Her motive was clear. Ako was in danger.

Ako ran outside of the school. The students were confused. She had to find a way to transform to Hardgore Alice.

She can't transform here. If she does, everyone would find out her identity. She'd break the rule, and she would be eliminated… and die.

Outside the school gates, no turning back. She glanced behind her. Where was the raincoat girl?

She had to go to an alley… somewhere dark, somewhere alone.

Then she felt pain. Her back was warm. No, it was hot.

She couldn't move.

She looked down.

A blade sticking out from her.

"Gk…"

The blade was pulled out. She looked behind her.

The swimsuit girl with the raincoat was holding some kind of… halberd.

Was Ako hallucinating? The swimsuit girl disappeared. She turned into a puddle of water. Ako's legs felt weak.

She fell towards the asphalt. It hurt. It didn't matter.

She had to see Snow White. She had to find Snow White. She had to meet Snow White one more time.

In her right hand, the Rabbit's Foot began to vibrate.

Koyuki was in her middle school uniform. She was walking to school. She was angry last night, and had decided to not become Snow White today.

On the way to school. She could see something. A crowd of people.

She wasn't Snow White, so she couldn't hear any voices from anyone. But, what was this?

She went on over to a back alley and transformed.

That's when she heard it.

‘*Snow White… Snow White…*’

A soft voice. A small girl.

Snow White ran over to the crowd of people, and pushed them all away. There, she found a girl lying on a pool of her own blood.

Snow White was shocked, but she went over to the girl. No one stopped her.

“Oh my god…”

The girl was coughing blood.

“Snow White… You came…”

“H-How do you know my name? Are you okay?”

“I’m sorry… I’m sorry that you lost hope…”

“Wh-What?”

The girl opened her right hand and offered Snow White the object she was holding.

The Lucky Rabbit’s Foot.

Snow White realized who she was now.

“Hardgore Alice!? No, no, no…”

“There are still real Magical Girls… in the city… You’re one of them”

She smiled.

Snow White saw the girl’s Magical Phone. It had a keychain. The key…

…The key that she lost a long time ago.

It’s the same girl.

“You’re her”

“I’m glad I got to… *cough*… see you again. I’m sorry I couldn’t last…”

Snow White took the Rabbit’s Foot, and took her hand.

Snow White began to cry.

“It’s okay. I’m here now. Hardgore Alice, it’s okay!”

She hugged her.

The girl smiled, and closed her eyes. The warmth from her body slowly began to fade away.

Minael had learned her mistake.

When her sister died, she was reckless. Their plan was perfect, but Minael revealed herself. Yunael too.

They celebrated how stupid their opponents were, and Yuna paid with her life.

Minael wouldn’t make that mistake.

That night, on the National Highway. She wanted to pick a fight with Snow White and Hardgore Alice.

Then Tama was discovered by one of them. Stupid dog.

Minael took the cloak. She had a plan.

She put the cloak on that bunny doll Hardgore Alice loved to carry around with her.

Then, she transformed into the plush doll.

Picked up by Hardgore Alice. She patiently waited. They rescued people, then Snow White and Alice got into a heated argument. Then Snow White left.

Then Hardgore Alice went home…

Then she went to sleep as a human form. That’s when Minael returned.

Returned to the temple, and told Swim Swim her whereabouts.

Then she went back to Alice's address. She stayed as the plush toy. She stayed and kept Swim Swim updated.

Hardgore Alice never understood what happened. She never knew how Swim Swim found her at school.

Trapped. Attacked in a place with thousands of people. Unable to transform.

If they had fought Winterprison like that, Yuna would be alive.

Minael was smarter now. She would fight for her sister.

"Your death isn't meaningless, Yuna".

One down, two to go.

CHAPTER 8:
DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

2 Days after the death of Hardgore Alice. Swim Swim had received a message in her Magical Phone.

The Forest Musician, Clamberry, would like to meet with her personally.

She had accepted the offer.

The reply was instantaneous, though Swim Swim already expected a trap. Ambushes need to always be anticipated, after all.

However, if she was prepared, there would be no problem.

Healing Medicine.

Not only can this cure wounds, this increases body tension and strength, highly increasing someone's durability.

Swim Swim had given one tablet for each of her comrades.

The duration of the effects are 30 minutes. She had given instructions to swallow them only once signaled. Then, they would attack Clamberry.

The meeting place was high in the mountains, in the outskirts of N-City. The wilderness, not urban.

Most people would have to climb up a long mountain trail to reach this location.

The destination was an abandoned resort. Originally used by tourists in the winter for snowboarding. There was still a path there, but no one visits anymore. Perhaps this was Clamberry's home base.

Just as her name suggests, Clamberry's home base is loaded with wild flowers and animals crawling and running around.

No roads, just dirt paths.

The pathways leading here were steep, and for humans, that meant navigating the area very carefully. For Magical Girls, this wasn't really a problem.

Clamberry had told Swim Swim of their designated meeting place.

A hut in the middle of the path.

A few years ago, there was a landslide here, so it's fairly abandoned. However, the hut remained intact since then.

The only people who would visit the hut would be adventure seekers or people who get asked to dares.

Minael and Tama were assigned their specific lookout points by Swim Swim.

Minael's emotions were unstable. She was constantly angry.

Tama is also unstable in a different way. She probably wouldn't be able to handle herself in a fight.

Only Swim Swim was emotionally calm enough. She was also their leader, so she has to take responsibility. She will wait for Clamberry in the meeting place.

The time is midnight.

Owls can be heard occasionally. The noise of crickets was everywhere.

The area would be different if they're fighting at nighttime. It's darker, and probably not as easily visible than the day.

Swim Swim waited.

Then, her Magical Phone played a ringtone. She's here.

Clamberry will soon come to fight them 3-on-1.

Swim Swim's team outnumbers her, but Swim Swim didn't underestimate her. She swallowed the medicine, and signaled the other Magical Girls to do the same.

When it went through and got swallowed, Swim Swim felt an overwhelming feeling of strength from her body.

Looks like the effects are starting.

30 minutes…

Soon.

Has to be now.

At that moment, Swim Swim heard a startled cry. More like a yelp.

Tama!

It already begun.

"She's here!" Swim Swim said as she dived to the ground.

Clamberry had amazing hearing.

Her powers of hearing far exceed any Magical Girl.

Her gift over sound is her Magical Skill. Therefore, it was natural that she use it to her full potential.

The Invisibility Cloak is impervious to hearing or sight. Of course, Clamberry knew this, so she had to do better.

She knew Swim Swim's team entered her territory the moment she heard the footsteps of Tama, scrambling like a dog, and the flutter of Minael's angelic wings as they entered the forest.

All she had to do was keep listening from the safety of her base.

Then the footsteps stopped. They're probably hiding at that point.

Clamberry walked down her mountain, picked up a small stone pebble.

As she arrived on the scene, she threw the pebble. It bounced off something invisible. She heard a yelp.

Found you.

Suddenly, a large hole appeared where she threw the stone. It was about 1 meter in diameter.

The Magical Girl is escaping underground.

Clamberry must've hit an arm or something. However, whatever she hit, it caused enough damage to scare that Magical Girl.

She threw the stone with the intention to kill, but for some reason, it must've only wounded her. Either she underestimated the durability of a Magical Girl's body, or they're using magic to enhance their body's durability.

Must be the Healing Medicine.

She had listened to the scratches underground. They weren't chasing her or coming towards her. In fact, it looked like the noises were moving away from her.

Suddenly, a large rock began flying in the air towards Clamberry. Fast. Durable. This wasn't a normal rock.

The rock kept hitting her.

It was fast. The arm, then the back, then it flew over to her shoulder.

Clamberry focused on the movements, her reflexes are far too fast for the rock to anticipate, and calmly, she aimed her fist at the incoming rock.

The beating stopped.

The rock had transformed into an angel with a hole in her chest.

What a boring opponent.

Clamberry threw the angel away to the ground.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I panicked. My arm hurts" said Tama.

Swim Swim had gone underground using the hole Tama provided for her. She had to be ready.

She could see the silhouette of a woman, with flowers. About a few meters ahead.

The corpse of a girl as well. Her face was the same as Yunael. This was Minael.

Swim Swim already made a mistake. One of her team already died. Why was she so careless?

She had to plan out this next attack. She had to take the advantage somehow.

This attack has to be flawless. She can't mess up or they'll all die.

"Clamberry is behind us. We need a pincer attack! I'll go from the bottom, you go from behind her!"

Swim Swim had the capability of becoming the strongest. Clamberry knew this.

Her skills should be suitable to Clamberry. In fact, Swim Swim may have the highest score in all the Magical Girls here.

Swim Swim had killed 3 Magical Girls now.

Clamberry had been rooting for her. She would've been the perfect opponent, had she survived till the end.

Not only is she skilled, but she is also ruthless.

However, now, Clamberry had to kill her and win.

Swim Swim was strong, but foolish to come to Clamberry's base without realizing the severe power difference between the two.

Truly, this was survival of the fittest, and Swim Swim had to prove she was stronger.

Swim Swim's powers were top class as well. It was a nearly invincible power. Her Magical Skill was to become liquid.

Theoretically, you can't hurt liquid, as your body simply passes through the liquid.

However, there are still things that affect liquid matter the way that solid matter cannot. Something that affects the liquid form.

For example, light. Sound also works.

Clamberry heard Swim Swim's movements from underground. Tama was approaching from the trees.

Swim Swim believed that she was stealthier, but you can't hide a heartbeat.

Tama was going clockwise, Swim Swim was going counterclockwise. This was a pincer attack. A move made so that Clamberry wouldn't be able to escape the attack.

Even if you know it's coming, it will be hard to counter directly, so Clamberry had to think fast.

She had to block one and take the hit of the other if she can't dodge fast enough.

If she were to choose someone to block, would it be Tama or Swim Swim.

Obviously Swim Swim. She's the more dangerous one.

Swim Swim's head was about 30 cm below the ground. Now's Clamberry's chance.

She jumped backwards. Swim Swim burst out from underground. Tama ran but was a little late on the timing.

A huge halberd appeared on Swim Swim's hand.

She jumped above Clamberry. She thought it was a surprise attack.

Clamberry smiled.

She turned around and extended her left arm forward towards Swim Swim.

A shockwave of sound. Soundwaves coming out of Clamberry's hand. Intense. Loud. The trees even began to shake.

A high powered blast that sent Swim Swim flying towards the trees and boulders behind her.

Tama stopped in her tracks and watched the scene with horror.

Clamberry had to use her Magical Skill if she wanted to hurt Swim Swim. Attacking her would just be useless with Swim Swim's power.

Clamberry remembered the old days. Fighting the gigantic demon. Using her full power. This was very satisfying.

Clamberry walked over to where Swim Swim landed. She was prepared to kill her. She raised her right foot to crush Swim Swim's head.

But then, she stopped. She didn't immediately drop her foot to Swim Swim.

Because the person lying there wasn't Swim Swim, or… didn't look like her.

The person lying down was a small girl.

She was about 11 years old, probably still in elementary school.

Clamberry hesitated.

This was Swim Swim's human form. She must have fell unconscious after the soundwave attack. Her body was bloody and bruised.

Normally, Clamberry wouldn't mind killing children, or anything in her way. Age doesn't matter to her.

However, Clamberry was a combat enthusiast.

This… Swim Swim's human form.

A young elementary school girl with skills rivalling other Magical Girls, had the potential. When Clamberry saw Swim Swim, she saw herself.

It was only a few seconds of hesitation.

But those few seconds were ones where Clamberry was distracted.

She felt a painful scratch on her back. Her jacket was ripped. There was a sharp hot pain from her back.

The damage wasn't severe enough to affect her.

Tama.

Clamberry knew Tama's Magical Skill.

Create holes up to 1 meter in diameter.

Wherever she scratched. The ground. Concrete. Any surface. That means it includes… the human body.

Regret filled Clamberry's head.

She was foolish, and she paid the price.

Not a second too soon, she felt it. The hole forming. It rapidly expanded.

Her upper body was gone. The flowers of her outfit fell down. Her lower body simply dropped, blood pouring out of the non-existent upper half.

Tama saw the blood squirt out of Clamberry's lower torso. There were guts spilling out, and everything else had gone.

That was her power.

She killed someone.

She did it on instinct.

Tama vomited on the spot. It was a logical reaction to seeing something like that in front of your eyes.

But there are more important things to attend to.

"Swim-Chan!"

Tama went over towards the rubble and found the unconscious body of an 11-year old girl.

"Huh!? Swim-Chan?"

Tama was confused. What should she do. She didn't want to shake her awake. She carried her and went over towards safety.

She set her down in the soft grass, hoping that she was still alive.

Slowly, the girl's eyes began to open.

"Swim-Chan? Swim-Chan! You're alive!"

"…Tama?"

The girl looked around, dazed. She stood up, and her legs were wobbling. Tama supported her standing up.

The girl picked up her Magical Phone.

A light eloped her, and she became taller. Then, when the light dispersed, she transformed into the figure that Tama was familiar with.

White swimsuit, goggles, headphones.

Swim Swim.

“It really is you, Swim-Chan! But wow, I didn’t know you were still so young!”

Tama had always thought Swim-Swim was older than her. But in a way, it was nice to see that she’s actually so young.

Tama herself was a Middle School girl, and Swim Swim was still in elementary after all.

“Yes… yes, I am”

Finally, everything is okay. There should be 4 Magical Girls now.

Swim Swim raised her right arm. The halberd appeared in her hand.

Tama felt a sharp pain in her neck. The sensation of flying.

Tama couldn’t feel her body. Her legs couldn’t support her.

She fell to her knees, and before she understood what happened, everything faded.

Swim Swim felt sadness. She didn’t want to do it.

‘*No one can know your real identity as a Magical Girl*’. That was what Ruler had taught her. That was the rule.

Swim Swim had to kill Tama, because she found out who she really was.

Why did Tama have to see her.

Swim Swim liked Tama. Tama was her friend, but Ruler’s orders had to be obeyed.

Swim Swim began to cry. She had to kill her friend.

Then, she heard a voice from her Magical Phone. The digital voice of Fav appeared and talked to her.

“Hey, new Master! I can hear you! Can you hear me, Pon?”

Swim Swim looked over at Fav.

“There’s so many things I have to talk to you about. You need to get caught up to speed with *Magical Girl Raising Project* and all that comes with it, Pon!”

Swim Swim was confused.

“What… What’s a… Master?”

“A very amazing Magical Girl, Pon! Now we get to work together, Pon!”

“…Work together?”

“That’s right! There’s lots to do, and plenty of work to be done, Pon!”

“…I’m not interested”

Swim Swim turned off her Magical Phone.

Ruler would never want to do this. Ruler wouldn’t want to cooperate with the enemy like this. Would she?

Swim Swim didn’t know, but she was sure Ruler would want the team to be honored.

Swim Swim was the only one left.

EMERGENCY CHAT NOTICE

Fav: Attention! This is an Emergency Chat notice! Everyone’s Magical Phones will be forcefully turned on so you can all see this message!

Fav: A very important announcement.

Fav: Firstly, we have eliminations to announce

Fav: Minael

Fav: Tama

Fav: The Forest Musician, Clamberry

Fav: We've reached the goal of 4 Magical Girls or less, Pon!

Fav: You'll all be contacted personally, later, Pon!

Fav: See you!

CHAPTER 9:
A BEAUTIFUL CHAOS

In general, the people of the *Land of Magic* don't get along well with the Human Resources department.

They were rather unorthodox in their methods. Even among the citizens of the *Land of Magic*.

For example, it's fairly common for a mage to have some kind of familiar.
The most popular choices for these would be something like an owl or a cat. An animal, generally.

Human Resources often have electronic fairies. They were fairly strange beings. Half black and half white. Flying around, as well as residing within their Magical Phones.

For the most part, these fairies were able to do the jobs of their masters a lot better than they could.

The Human Resources department make up over 80% of the workforce of the *Land of Magic*'s main working objectives.

Recruiting Magical Girls to become witches within the *Land of Magic* was standard practice.

Fav was a familiar that was a veteran at his job. He was good at it. He's been doing it for a very long time.

However, somewhere along that time, he had lost his passion.

He'd lost the one thing that kept him going.

Maybe he didn't have it in the first place.

That all changed when he met Clamberry.

It was supposed to be a regular test. A regular selection of Magical Girls. Clamberry was one of the Magical Girls in that selection.

Then a demon was summoned.

Fav's Master and many of the Magical Girls were slaughtered by the monster.

Clamberry defeated it using all her power.

It was… a spectacle.

It was entertaining.

It wasn't routine.

It was interesting!

Something happened. Something different happened. Adrenaline. Fav felt alive watching it.

He could also see it in the young Magical Girl.

Clamberry's eyes. Her smile. She felt joy. Perhaps it was the fighting, or maybe it was defeating a powerful opponent. Fav didn't really know, but he knew what she felt at that moment.

Then, Fav approached her.

"What if I told you you could do this forever, Pon?"

From that point on, Fav became Clamberry's familiar, and Clamberry became his Master.

Fav had written off a report that claimed there was an accident, but otherwise everything's fine.

Because of Fav's longtime trust, the *Land of Magic* believed in his report.

Fav and Clamberry devised a different kind of selection test. A different kind of screening for new Magical Girls.

Normally, the tests would be determined by who collects the most Magical Candies, as a measure of how helpful and useful the Magical Girls are.

They were assigned powers based on their personality.

Then, whoever won would become a real witch and be able to go to the *Land of Magic* for their real assignment. Protecting the world.

The ones that didn't make it?

They would have had their memories wiped, their Magical Phones taken away, and would live a normal life.

That was very boring.

Clamberry designed a new test.

Eliminations would mean killing.

Clamberry had planned out how to entice the Magical Girls to kill each other. Should killing remove the eliminations for the week, surely they would all begin to fight.

Not only that, but Clamberry was a rather unusual Master.

She agreed to join in the selection test because she wanted to fight the strongest opponent, even if she might die because of it.

It was a win-win situation.

Clamberry would be able to fight the strongest opponents.

Fav would be able to enjoy the spectacle he wanted to see.

Sure enough, events happened as it did.

Clamberry was surprisingly killed near the end-game.

Fav liked Clamberry. Clamberry shared his passion, his passion of having something *different* for once.

However, even if Clamberry died, Fav could only feel sadness and move on.

The new Master would be the one that killed her.

Swim Swim.

Like Clamberry, she was young.

However, unlike Clamberry, she didn't understand what Fav wanted to do. She was stubborn. She refused to work together.

Fav had to find a new Master.

Not only that.

Swim Swim had to be killed.

La Pucelle had promised to protect her.

Sister Nana had promised to seek out a peaceful end.

Hardgore Alice… Hardgore Alice was just a young girl who lost her key one day.

The game had ended. The killings should be over now. But then, Snow White asked herself.

Why am I a survivor?

She was a crybaby. She was easily afraid. She didn't protect anyone. She didn't do anything. She ran away from her responsibilities.

Why was she, out of all the others that deserved it, the one that survived till the end?

Snow White had received an invitation to meet up with another surviving Magical Girl.

It’s not like there’s any reason not to. Snow White accepted.

Maybe this was Snow White’s problem. She had always assumed the best of people. She always considered them a friend no matter what.

Acts like this caused her friends to die. Whatever. It didn’t matter anymore.

The meeting place was at the beach. Near the ruins of the steel tower. The Magical Girl that met Snow White. There was no malice to her. Dressed in black, with a red scarf. This was Ripple.

“…Hello”

“Hello”

“Swim Swim…”

“Huh?”

“If you know anything about Swim Swim… Tell me…”

“Why? What about Swim Swim?”

“I’m going to kill her”

“W-What!? Wait, the killings have stopped! There’s no need to eliminate anyone anymore!”

“I know… This is revenge… She killed my friend…”

“I don’t think you should-”

“She killed… my *friend*”

Snow White didn’t know what to say. She was tired. She just wanted this to be over. She couldn’t even muster the strength to argue.

But she wanted to stop any more people from getting killed.

“…Nothing, huh? Fine”

Ripple stood up and walked away.

“Wait!”

“What?”

“You shouldn’t kill her. I understand… I understand how you feel”

“Do you? Do you *really*?”

“Yes! I’ve lost a friend too. I’ve lost someone as well. But we’re Magical Girls, not murderers”

“Snow White. Let me ask you something… Have you killed anyone at all throughout this whole thing?”

“Huh?”

Ripple hung her head down.

“As I thought. You won’t kill anyone. You’re not that kind of person.”

“Wait, what are you trying to say?”

“You’re right… We’re supposed to be Magical Girls, not murderers… But you’re wrong on one thing… *We* aren’t Magical Girls. *You* are.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m not a Magical Girl… I’m a murderer… I’ve failed already. Now I’m going to avenge my friend’s death”

Ripple walked ahead. Snow White couldn’t convince her to stop. She just stood up and tried to approach her. Ripple stopped and looked back.

“You know something. I’ve never told anyone this. I actually *wanted* to be a Magical Girl… I wanted to be like *you*, Snow White.”

Snow White realized she couldn’t stop Ripple. There was absolutely nothing she could do. Ripple was determined to fight Swim Swim.

But, without preparation, Snow White somehow knew, if Ripple fought Swim Swim now, Ripple will die.

Snow White only remembered Swim Swim from the time she attacked her with Ruler.

“Swim Swim’s weakness is sound and light, Pon! Anything that can emit sound or light will affect her even in liquid form, Pon!”

A sound coming from both their Magical Phones.

Fav.

Ripple looked at hers. She nodded.

“Thank you, Fav”

Quickly, Ripple ran from the ruins of the steel tower. Snow White tried to catch her, but couldn’t do it in time.

Snow White grabbed her Magical Phone.

“Why… Why are you helping her?”

“Because Swim Swim isn’t a very good Master, Pon! She killed Clamberry and Tama! She killed a lot of people, but when it was her turn to be a Master, she refused, Pon! She has the potential to be a great killer, but not a good administrator it seems”

“So you’re just going to *kill* her?”

“Why are you angry, Pon? Don’t you realize that you’ll be the winner if Ripple and Swim Swim both die? The *Land of Magic* will then invite you and you’ll be a more powerful Magical Girl, Pon! Just like you dreamed of, Pon!”

Snow White clenched the Magical Phone in her right hand.

She threw it straight down with all her strength. The Magical Phone’s screen broke. All black.

“Nice try, Pon! I’m not gonna die if you break *your* Magical Phone, so you should figure out some other way, Pon!”

Hardgore Alice told her that the real Magical Girl in this city was Snow White.

Right now, Snow White didn’t feel like a Magical Girl at all.

She didn’t want to disappoint Hardgore Alice. Not after what Alice had gone through. Even when death was coming for her, Alice thought of someone other than herself.

Snow White knew what she had to do.

She jumped down the ruins of the steel tower, and flew as fast as she could.

Swim Swim had travelled towards N-City's local dam.

Takashimadai Dam. That was its name. It was quiet here. Not many people would visit the dam regardless.

There is a large reservoir of water on one side of the dam, and stretching past the lake were mountains and forests as far as the eye could see.

On the other side were the skyscrapers of N-City. It's just below the dam's walls that you could see the sights and sounds of the city.

On top of the dam, it's like a mixture of the two. Nature and urban landscapes clashing and meeting as one.

Swim Swim had apparently become a Master.

She had no idea what exactly that meant. She didn't learn many complicated words in elementary school.

She knows that it involves working together with Fav, and that's not going to happen.

Swim Swim had received an invitation to meet with Ripple. She accepted.

The killings were over, but Swim Swim still expected an ambush. After all, powerful opponents are to be killed, and Swim Swim expects her opponent to have the same thoughts she did.

Swim Swim was a failure of a leader. A leader with no followers.

Then, it began to drizzle.

Rain.

The lake became uncalm, and the concrete pavement had black dots of water. The rain is getting harder.

In the distance, Swim Swim could see the silhouette of a girl.

Wearing what seemed to be a coat. A scarf. Long hair.

100 meters

She walks slowly

90 meters

She begins to run

80 meters

Swim Swim could see the features start to form

70 meters

Why does she look familiar?

60 meters

The girl pulled out her sword

50 meters

The girl had a red scarf

40 meters

The scarf had letters in Kanji written on them. Swim Swim couldn't read them

30 meters

Now Swim Swim remembered. This was the girl from before with Top Speed. Ripple. Swim Swim took out a pill from the *Healing Medicine* bottle.

20 meters

Swim Swim summoned her halberd

10 meters

Swim Swim swallowed a pill of the *Healing Medicine*. Now it begins.

Ripple charged straight towards Swim Swim. Ripple knew she was faster than Swim Swim from their last battle.

Swinging her sword, slashing Swim Swim's chest, it passed through her as the chest turned to liquid.

So speed won't work. Swim Swim's instincts were faster.

Retreating back a few steps, Ripple attempted to throw three Shurikens at Swim Swim, but they just passed through her.

Swim Swim advanced with the Halberd ready to swing.

A slow weapon. Ripple dodged to the right.

Wait…

It swung faster…

Did Swim Swim train with it… What's going on?

Ripple felt a slash, and a sharp pain at her left eye…

Her left vision was stained blood red.

Instinctively, Ripple punched Swim Swim, only for her to liquefy herself. Ripple had her sword ready.

Swim Swim reappeared behind Ripple. Ripple tried to block with her sword, but Swim Swim stabbed her halberd at Ripple's left arm.

The pain shot through Ripple, and Swim Swim slashed through it.

Ripple's left arm had a massive gash. Blood was flowing.

Ripple took off Top Speed's coat, and from it, pulled something from a bag.

Calamity Mary's 4-Dimensional bag. Filled with all her items. All her weapons.

Ripple launched a high kick at Swim Swim's face, only for her face to turn into liquid. Ripple jumped away, and from the bag, she pulled out her weapon.

A flashbang grenade.

Flashbang grenades are normally meant to stun people. It is a non-lethal weapon meant for disorienting your enemies.

It emits a large noise and a flash of light.

Swim Swim's weaknesses are sound and light. With it, she won't be able to transform to liquid, according to Fav.

Ripple's Magical Skill means she'll be able to hit exactly where she wants to hit.

Ripple threw the flashbang, aiming at Swim Swim's body. Sure enough, Swim Swim instinctively turned to liquid, and attempted to survive the explosion.

Normally, a flashbang wouldn't be lethal.

But this flashbang was enhanced by Calamity Mary. Even if she was dead, her enhancements stay with the weapon.

The explosion was large, the lights that flashed were burning. Ripple thought she was out of the blast zone, but underestimated how much Calamity Mary had strengthened that flashbang.

Swim Swim was in ground zero, screaming in pain. It's working.

Ripple was thrown backwards from the shockwave.

She couldn't hear the rain.

Her eyes were flashed white.

She could barely see Swim Swim's figure, just barely.

As she flew backwards, Ripple threw her Katana at Swim Swim.

She aimed for the heart.

Ripple was thrown towards the railings, where her back hits. Her vision was dazed. Her body felt heavy. Her left arm's skin was peeling off of her, it felt numb.

Oh… she had no left arm anymore… It was gone. That explains it.

Ripple slowly began to regain her senses.

She saw a small girl in the distance, a Katana lodged in her chest.

Then she saw in the corner of her eye, Snow White, flying towards the scene of battle.

Snow White…

She was the ideal Magical Girl.

Ripple was just a murderer.

Ripple's breathing was weak. So much blood coming out. If she let go now, she wouldn't have a problem.

Snow White never killed anyone.

Snow White will protect everyone, the way Ripple couldn't.

Would Top Speed be angry at Ripple?

Snow White ran towards Ripple.

But Ripple had already begun to lose consciousness. The pain was too much, and she fell forwards, fading.

Snow White saw the scene.

An elementary school girl with a sword lodged to her chest.

A high school girl, a slash in her left eye, and blood being washed by the rain.

A halberd had been dropped nearby. Two Magical Phones as well. One was larger than the other.

"Congratulations"

Snow White heard a voice.

It came from the large Magical Phone.

"Ripple and Swim Swim are gone, Pon! You're the only one left! That makes you the winner, Pon!"

Snow White was too late to stop the battle.

She didn't want this.

"You didn't kill anyone though, so this is kind of a pain. My new Master isn't a killer like the last one, Pon!"

Snow White's eyes widened.

'*I wish I had a stronger master, Pon!*'

She heard it.

She heard it in her head.

Fav's voice. Which means…

"Fav… I can hear your voice"

"Of course you can, Pon! I'm talking!"

"No, I hear your troubles in my head. Which means… you're really here. You live *there*"

Fav froze.

"What happens if I destroy that phone, Fav?"

"Well, that's er…"

"…Fav, I'm not going to forgive you for anything"

"What are you planning to do, Pon?"

Snow White pointed to the large Magical Phone. She picked it up.

She threw it towards the concrete. Stomping it.

Stomp

Stomp

Stomp

She picked up a stone, and smashed it.

She kicked it. Punched it. Threw it.

“There’s no use, Pon! That phone was made to withstand normal means of attacks. It was made to survive in the *Land of Magic* after all, Pon!”

Fav had a smile on his face.

“You simply are too weak, Pon! You were foolish to try and think you can just stay alive by doing nothing, Pon! La Pucelle died for you. Hardgore Alice died for you. You act just like Sister Nana, and especially that fool Top Speed, who avoided danger and would rather run than fight, Pon!”

“…Shut up”

That wasn’t Snow White’s voice. It wasn’t Fav’s voice.

She saw Ripple, back in her Magical Girl form, balancing herself on a cane.

“Ripple!? You’re alive, how did you live, Pon!”

“…No idea. I should’ve died… But I didn’t, so now… I’m pissed”

Snow White felt something in her pocket vibrate. She pulled it out. The Lucky Rabbit’s Foot.

Snow White looked at Ripple. She wasn’t supporting herself on a cane.

It wasn’t a cane, it was a halberd.

‘*Crap! She has that halberd, Pon!’*

‘That’s a Land of Magic level weapon, Pon!’

‘Don’t use it… Don’t use it…’

Snow White threw the administrator Magical Phone at Ripple’s feet.

Ripple nodded.

“W-Wait! Ripple, I wasn’t insulting Top Speed or any other Magical Girls! Clamberry made me do it! She’s the one behind all this! I’m just a familiar, Pon!”

“Shut up!” yelled Snow White.

She approached Ripple.

Fav began to visibly shake.

Ripple lifted the halberd, and stabbed it through the Magical Phone on the ground.

A burst of light, electricity. Fav slowly began to twitch and fizzle, until he was gone.

It's over.

Epilogue

In a small restaurant, two girls were sitting together. One was playing on her smartphone.

"Man… Magical Girl sightings are few and far between now"

"You're *still* going on about that? Sumi…"

"Not all the time! Did you get the e-mail from Koyuki?"

"Maybe. What's up with her? I didn't see her in school for a while"

"She said she'll be away for about a month. Sheesh, pretty long time if you ask me"

"Why's that?"

"Dunno, family business"

"Knowing you, you'd probably think she's a Magical Girl in disguise or something"

"Wouldn't that be cool!?"

"Oh my god, Sumi!"

The girl named Sumi continued to browse her phone.

"Hey, look at this! There's a sighting in the Middle East!"

"What?"

“A ninja Magical Girl, with one eye, stopped a conflict in the area. Another one in China! Russia! America! Terrorist attacks, rebellions, gang fights? Oh my god!”

“Is this for real? Guess it’s not local anymore”

“So… you think we should give the game a shot?”

“What game?”

“*That* game, y’know, Magical Girl Raising Project. It’s supposedly a game that can make you into a Magical Girl!”

“Er… I don’t know if you’ve heard, but it’s on hiatus”

“What? Why?”

“I dunno. Some kind of internal bug or something”

“Aww”

“C’mon, there’s more than one game on the market”

“If Koyuki were here, she’d probably complain. She loves that game”

Above the two girls was a jumbo jet plane flying by.

The skies were clear, and the clouds moving fast.

The jumbo jet was flying in a normal day. On its wings however, was a girl with a white school uniform.

She also had flowers on her skirt.

She also had a smartphone of some kind. A big one.

Snow White had become an official *Land of Magic* Magical Girl. Both she and Ripple had been contacted by the *Land of Magic*.

Snow White had an administrator level Magical Phone as well.

She opened it and checked her e-mails.

Something about a possible coup, some terrorist attacks, possible sightings of bad guys around the world.

Snow White had thought that she would be able to help N-City, but now she was helping with international affairs.

There was another e-mail message from an old friend.

Snow White opened it.

'Possible test tampering. One of the administrators might be going rogue again. Might wanna check it out
-R'

Snow White replied to it.

'Got it. Thanks for the tip, Ripple'

Snow White had been helping in more secretive ways, but Ripple had actually started to gain a fanbase among the human world.

She had been more active and more pronounced.

People loved her.

Snow White wished that she knew Ripple beforehand. Maybe she could've helped her before.

In a way, she was proud of Ripple. Ripple managed to fulfill her dream of being a Magical Girl.

For the past few months, they had been working together to stop crimes.

The *Land of Magic* would even send them missions to stop rogue Magical Girls as well.
In the end, Snow White would remember what happened with Clamberry and the incident a few months ago.

While the *Land of Magic* had issued an apology and tried its best to make up for it, Snow White was determined that it won't happen again.

If it did happen again, Snow White would be there to stop it.

She knows that Ripple would be there too.

For now, there’s a world that needs to be protected.